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ABSTRACT

This guide is for students working on dissertations that are based on qualitative research. The guide attempts to frame the dissertation process as a set of iterative cycles of deliberation which include facing the dissertation, moving into the dissertation, crafting the research proposal, proposing the study, living with the study, entering into public discourse, and adjusting to life after the dissertation. The first section consists of 10 chapters focusing on these cycles. The second section is comprised of five "think pieces," more informal and conversational conceptions (and misconceptions) of deliberation in relation to theoretical perspectives on "discourse." These pieces are titled: "What Do We Mean by Deliberation?" "Dissertation Study Groups: Cultivating a Community for Discursive Deliberation"; "Knowledge Claims and the Issue of Legitimacy in Educational Research"; "Tuning In to Discourses on Qualitative Inquiry"; and "Text/Interpretation". Throughout the book, insets provide many case examples. (Contains approximately 250 references.) (DB)

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A Guide for Students and Faculty

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Maria Piantanida
Noreen B. Garman

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THE QUALITATIVE DISSERTATION

To all those students who have
enriched our lives and thinking by sharing
their scholarly journey with us
and
To all those students who are about to
embark on their dissertation journey

THE QUALITATIVE DISSERTATION

A Guide for Students and Faculty

Maria Piantanida
Noreen B. Garman

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Contents

List of Exemplars and Case Studies ix

Preface xi

Genesis of the Book xi
Issues and Challenges xi
Need for a Book on Qualitative Dissertations in Education xii
Purpose and Organization of the Book xiii
Discourses of Qualitative Research xvi
Acknowledgments xvii

About the Authors xix

1 Cycles of Deliberation 1

The Notion of Iterative Cycles 2
The Notion of Deliberation 3
The Notion of Discursive Knowing 4
The Cycles of Deliberation—A Thumbnail Sketch 6

2 Facing the Dissertation 11

Precommitment Anxiety 13
The Meaning of Doctoral Study 17
Deliberations on Topic 19
Evolving a Personal Research Profile 24
Outcomes From the First Cycle of Deliberation 32

3 Moving Into the Dissertation 36

Immersion in Formal Discourses: Intent of the Study 37
Immersion in Formal Discourses: Inquiry Process 41
Immersion in Real-Time Discourses 48
Writing Precursors to the Research Proposal 51
Vulnerability of Discursive Deliberation 52

4 Crafting the Dissertation Proposal: Part 1 **59**
Logic of Justification, Research Genre, and Research Tradition 60
Bringing the Dissertation Into Focus 67
Recapping the Iterative Nature of the Proposal 78

5 Crafting the Dissertation Proposal: Part 2 **80**
General Structure of a Qualitative Dissertation Proposal 81
Title of the Study 82
Introduction to the Dissertation Proposal 84
The Study 88
Statement of Intent 89
Guiding Research Questions 92
Review of Relevant Discourses 99
Research Procedures 105
Anticipated Portrayals and Tentative Outline of Dissertation Chapters 111
Chapter Summary 111

6 Proposing the Study **116**
Forming a Dissertation Committee 117
Obtaining Approval From an Internal Review Board 119
Meeting to Review the Proposal 121
Dealing With Meeting Outcomes 124
Moving Forward Into the Study 127

7 Living With the Study: Generating Knowledge Through Portrayals **129**
Generating Knowledge in Qualitative Research 131
Generating Knowledge Through Crafting Portrayals 133
Researcher as Instrument of Inquiry 139
Role of Reflection 142
Owning the Study 144
Criteria for Judging Qualitative Dissertations 147
Chapter Summary 154

8 Living With the Study: Getting to Portrayals **156**
Immersing Oneself in the Inquiry 157
Amassing the Stuff of the Inquiry 159
Slogging Through the Stuff 166
Moving From Stable Data/Texts Toward Portrayals 170
Coming to a Conceptual Leap 172

Exemplars of the Movement From Stuff to Portrayals 172
Slogging and the Fine Art of Task Avoidance 177
Chapter Summary 179

9 Entering Into Public Discourse: The Dissertation Meeting 186
Challenging the Stereotype of "Defense as Inquisition" 187
Quality of the Dissertation 189
Congruity of Perspectives About the Quality of the Dissertation 192
The Role of the Dissertation in the Candidate's Professional Life 195
Anticipating Practical Considerations 197
Bringing Closure to the Dissertation Process 201
Entering the Doctoral Community 203
Chapter Summary/Conclusion 203

10 Life After Dissertation 204
Rebalancing Personal Life 205
Rebalancing Professional Life 206
Refocusing One's Intellectual Life 214

Afterword 223

Think Pieces 225
#1 What Do We Mean By Deliberation? 225
#2 Dissertation Study Groups: Cultivating a Community for Discursive Deliberation 231
#3 Knowledge Claims and the Issue of Legitimacy in Educational Research 239
#4 Tuning In to Discourses on Qualitative Inquiry 245
#5 Text/Interpretation 251

References 257

Index 267

List of Exemplars and Case Studies

Exemplar 2.1	The Emotional Power of the Dissertation	12
Exemplar 2.2	The Receding Horizon Phenomenon	15
Exemplar 2.3	Early Writing That Expresses Competing Possibilities for a Dissertation	26
Exemplar 2.4	Reflective Musings on Research Worldview	31
Exemplar 2.5	Deliberative Posture Toward Learning About Qualitative Research	34
Exemplar 3.1	Making Sense of Formal Discourses: An Example Excerpted From a Comprehensive Examination	39
Exemplar 3.2	A Defensive Approach to Justifying a Qualitative Study	47
Exemplar 3.3	Coming to Grips With the Internal Meaning of Formal Discourses	50
Exemplar 3.4	Trying Out Potential Ideas for a Study	54
Exemplar 4.1	Crafting a Study Consistent With One's Worldview, Personal Orientation, and Unique Talents	63
Exemplar 4.2	Qualitative/Interpretive Dissertations Illustrating Different Research Genres	68
Exemplar 4.3	A Narrative Study of Three Levels of Reflection in a College Composition Class: Teacher Journal, Student Portfolios, Teacher-Student Discourse	70
Exemplar 4.4	Pictures in Our Minds: A Narrative Study of the Incorporation of Creative Dramatics as Pedagogy in Elementary Classroom Content Areas	72
Exemplar 4.5	Our *Changing* Town, Our *Changing* School: Is Common Ground Possible?	74
Exemplar 4.6	Promises Made, Promises Broken: A Literary Criticism of the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Experience	77

Exemplar 5.1	Dissertation Titles	83
Exemplar 5.2	Example of Evolving Introduction	87
Exemplar 5.3	Intent of the Study: Alternative Frames	92
Exemplar 5.4	Evolution of a Statement of Intent	93
Exemplar 5.5	Initial Articulation of Questions for a Study on Creative Drama	95
Exemplar 5.6	Data-Gathering Questions Masquerading as Guiding Research Questions	97
Case Example 5.1	Sections of a Proposal	110
Exemplar 6.1	Response From a School District Office of Research to a Student Request to Gather Dissertation Data From Students	120
Exemplar 6.2	The Dynamic Nature of Customs and Rituals Surrounding the Proposal	123
Exemplar 6.3	Deliberative Versus Nondeliberative Stances	126
Exemplar 7.1	Phenomena and Contexts From Sample Dissertations	134
Exemplar 7.2	Developing Self as Instrument: Developing a Capacity to Listen	140
Exemplar 7.3	Developing Self as Instrument: Issues of Vulnerability and Authenticity	141
Exemplar 7.4	Owning the Study—Owning the Knowledge-Generating Process	146
Exemplar 7.5	Musings About Correspondence, Coherence, and Authenticity in Qualitative Research	150
Exemplar 7.6	Ethical Dilemmas and the Need for Ethical Sensibility	154
Exemplar 8.1	Probing the Significance of Qualitative Data	165
Exemplar 8.2	Emerging Trends in Digitalizing Nonverbal Data	169
Exemplar 8.3	Creating a Stable Data Record	174
Exemplar 8.4	A Glimpse Into the Process of Slogging Through Stuff	176
Case Example 8.1	Living With the Study—Amassing and Managing Data	180
Case Example 8.2	Resonating With the Stuff—Self as Instrument—Interim Data Displays	183
Exemplar 10.1	Where Is That Dr. Richards Anyway? Or, Not a Doctor in Sight	209
Exemplar 10.2	A Search for New Direction	213
Exemplar 10.3	Interior Transformations	215
Exemplar 10.4	Becoming Through Writing	220

Preface

Genesis of the Book

The seeds for this book were planted in 1980 at a time when the term *qualitative research* had not yet entered the mainstream discourses of educational inquiry. We, the authors, shared an interest in understanding what it meant to do an "alternative" dissertation—that is, one that did not follow the precepts of quasi-experimental research that were so dominant at our institution back then. Because few references were available in the educational literature to guide our thinking, we formed a dissertation study group in which to cultivate our understanding of what came to be called qualitative research. Since then, the study group has evolved through three generations, providing a fertile context within which the seeds of this book took root and grew.

Issues and Challenges

Coming to Grips With Qualitative Research

The dilemma confronting neophyte qualitative researchers (and the faculty who advise them) has changed dramatically in less than two decades. Early on, the challenge was fashioning a defensible study with support from a relatively limited body of literature that was drawn primarily from the social sciences (e.g., ethnography, sociological case study, action research). Today's challenge is quite the opposite—making sense of a burgeoning literature on qualitative research.[1] This challenge is made more difficult by two complications—first, a complexity inherent in the field itself, and second, the dysfunctional approaches that newcomers use to understand the field of qualitative research.

Complexity of the Field

The descriptor *qualitative* is troublesome because it holds different meanings depending upon what group of educational researchers is using the term. Writing in 1984, Soltis commented, "As a philosopher of education, I have been bothered by

the fact that I have been unable to place the many and vastly different languages and logics that people call educational research into a coherent conceptual framework" (p. 5). He then proposed three descriptors—empirical, interpretive, and critical—as such a conceptual frame. Recently, Sipe and Constable (1996) have suggested a fourth descriptor: deconstructivist. These descriptors provide a useful starting point for sorting out conflicting conceptions of inquiry that currently fall under the general heading of qualitative research. Yet those who are just beginning to explore the terrain of qualitative research often miss the significance of these conceptual markers.

Dysfunctional Approach Toward Qualitative Research

Many approach this multifaceted terrain with a goal of finding *the* qualitative method to substitute for some vaguely conceived notion of *the* quantitative method for doing research. (Or worse, they think of it merely as a way to escape statistics.) Tremendous time and energy (and money) can be consumed in the quest for one book that explains this imagined qualitative method. One student, for example, came to the first meeting of an introductory course on qualitative inquiry and proudly informed other students that she had purchased the textbook on how to do qualitative research. Because we rely on a variety of readings rather than a single, required text for the course, we were puzzled by this assertion until she pulled from her briefcase a newly purchased copy of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* by Denzin and Lincoln (1994). No matter how many times we explained that the *Handbook* introduced a number of different approaches to qualitative research, this student clung to the belief that it contained *the* formula for doing a qualitative study.

Although this student's misconceptions were somewhat extreme, it typifies a common phenomenon that we have encountered in our work with neophyte researchers. Namely, they approach the study of qualitative research with a number of dysfunctional notions about qualitative research and the dissertation process. Early on, we thought that dispelling these notions through lectures, assigned readings, and guided discussions would clear the way for students to do the dissertation. Now, however, we see an interactive spiral—students confront their preconceptions as they move deeper into the dissertation, and they move deeper into the dissertation as they work through their misconceptions.

The issue for students—and their faculty advisors—is finding resources that help them come to grips with what it means to do qualitative research. Central to this process is recognizing and deliberating on one's taken-for-granted assumptions.

Need for a Book on Qualitative Dissertations in Education

Newcomers to qualitative research often perceive the process of planning and conducting such a study to be highly ambiguous. This ambiguity is often height-

ened when doctoral students enshroud the dissertation with a general sense of mystery. This combination of ambiguity and mystery can exacerbate whatever latent anxiety students may bring to the dissertation process. It is not unusual for the anxiety to manifest as debilitating bewilderment or frenzied activity as students search desperately for ways to tackle this amorphous thing called "The Dissertation."

A not uncommon response to this anxiety is the quest for a how-to guide. Yet this strategy may backfire if students unwittingly seize upon guides that are embedded in a quantitative research tradition. Attempts to reconcile qualitative research literature with incongruent advice about dissertation style and format can lead to conceptual gridlock.

Conversely, differentiating the ambiguity inherent in qualitative inquiry from the amorphousness of an unfamiliar task (i.e., undertaking the dissertation) can have a calming effect. As we think about those who have successfully completed qualitative dissertations, two dynamics seem to be at play. One, successful novice researchers come to see and embrace the reduction of ambiguity as an essential aspect of the inquiry process. Two, distinguishing specific subtasks within this seemingly amorphous process enables students to set aside their anxiety and concentrate on the inquiry.

Purpose and Organization of the Book

Framing the Dissertation Process

Although it would be foolhardy to offer highly prescriptive advice for conceptualizing, proposing, writing, and defending qualitative dissertations, we do believe it is possible to describe patterns that help to demystify the process. We conceive of these patterns as *cycles of deliberation*, which we characterize as the following:

- Facing the dissertation
- Moving into the dissertation
- Crafting the research proposal
- Proposing the study
- Living with the study
- Entering into public discourses
- Adjusting to life after the dissertation

Efforts to write a coherent account of the dissertation process may create the erroneous impression that each cycle is a discrete, linear step. As the dissertation process plays out in real life, however, these cycles represent layers of immersion in the inquiry process. During a hallway encounter with a faculty member, one student described this process of immersion as a downward spiral:

"Michelle, I heard your proposal passed today. I'm glad to see you finally got moving again."

"Thanks, Dale. But you should know I have been moving all along. I've just been on a spiral that's taking me deeper into my study."

"Yeah. Well, it's good to see you moving again."

"I guess you measure movement in terms of 'getting done.' I see it as coming to deeper understanding."

As this comment suggests, movement from one cycle to the next occurs as students make deeper and clearer conceptual connections among key facets of the inquiry:

- One's self as researcher
- The intent or purpose of the inquiry
- The inquiry process
- The discourses that underpin both the intent and process of the inquiry

A fundamental premise of this book is that students come to these conceptual connections by engaging in discursive deliberation. In our experience, however, students do not necessarily come to the dissertation with a well-honed facility for discursive deliberation.

Purpose of the Book

Our purpose in writing this book, therefore, is to help students evolve their capacity for discursive deliberation as they work through the dissertation process. To do this, we use the notion of cycles of deliberation as a heuristic model[2] through which we attempt to do the following:

- Demystify the dissertation process
- Challenge dysfunctional, taken-for-granted assumptions about the dissertation and qualitative research that can impede the deliberation
- Flag issues that arise as students grapple with the facets of their inquiry
- Suggest strategies for moving into and through the cycles

Section Descriptors

In conceptualizing the structure for the book, we struggled with two variations of the proverbial chicken-and-egg dilemma. Often, we felt readers would need to have a big picture in order to understand the details being discussed. Yet the significance of the big picture might not be clear without an understanding of the details. The tension between the big picture/details dilemma was accentuated by a tension between our desire to demystify the dissertation process and our use of language that may seem obscure to novice researchers. Yet embedding theoretical explanations of complex concepts into our explanation of shaping a

qualitative dissertation seemed to increase, rather than decrease, the potential confusion. In the end, we addressed this dilemma by organizing the book into two sections. The first section consists of 10 chapters that focus on the cycles of deliberation.

The second section consists of several more theoretical think pieces. A *think piece* is a semiformal document that is more structured and public than an entry in a personal/professional journal yet less polished than a formal paper or article. Generally, think pieces focus on a particular idea, concept, issue, problem, or question. We use them as devices to stimulate deliberation and discourse and encourage students to use them as well. The final section of this book is a series of think pieces about concepts and issues that are particularly useful for students to consider as they come to grips with doing qualitative research.

Chapter 1, Cycles of Deliberation, provides a more detailed explanation of key concepts that frame our view of qualitative dissertations in education (i.e., iterative cycles, deliberation, and discourse).

Chapter 2, Facing the Dissertation, addresses what we consider to be the first cycle of deliberation, a time when students begin to think seriously about the dissertation. Prior to this time, the dissertation often looms vaguely on a distant horizon. Depending upon the students' background, intellectual tasks during this cycle can include letting go of fears about the dissertation, developing a mind-set compatible with deliberative discourse, and understanding the implications of claiming to do a qualitative study.

Chapter 3, Moving Into the Dissertation, explores a second cycle that begins as students shift from talking vaguely about doing a dissertation to preparing to write the dissertation proposal. Immersion in formal discourses related to all aspects of the inquiry is a central intellectual task during this cycle, as is developing a language for articulating the study.

Two chapters are devoted to the third deliberative cycle—Crafting the Dissertation Proposal. Chapter 4 provides a broader perspective aimed at giving readers a felt sense of the purpose of this cycle. Chapter 5 focuses in a more detailed way on specific elements of the research proposal.

Chapter 6, Proposing the Study, helps students to anticipate what happens as they move their study into a more public arena for formal review and approval by their committee.

The prolonged cycle of Living With the Study is considered in two chapters. Chapter 7 focuses on the concept of *portrayal* to give a sense of the structure of a qualitative study as well as the ways in which knowledge is represented. Chapter 8 focuses on the processes through which portrayals are generated.

Chapter 9, Entering Into Public Discourse—The Dissertation Meeting, addresses issues related to the public presentation and explication of the study. Chapter 10, Life After Dissertation, explores a sense of disequilibrium that can occur once the dissertation has been completed and life returns to "normal."

These 10 chapters are followed by five think pieces. In Think Piece #1 (What Do We Mean by Deliberation?), we explore more informal and conversational conceptions (and misconceptions) of deliberation in relation to theoretic perspectives on "discourse." Think Piece #2 (Dissertation Study Groups: Cultivating

a Community for Discursive Deliberation) suggests ways in which doctoral students might enter into more discursive ways of learning and knowing. The next two think pieces focus more directly on the epistemological underpinnings of qualitative research, looking first at Knowledge Claims and the Issue of Legitimacy in Educational Research (#3); then at the ways in which novice researchers can begin Tuning In to Discourses on Qualitative Inquiry (#4). The final think piece (#5) focuses on the concepts of Text and Interpretation.

Discourses of Qualitative Research

Definitional Versus Discursive Knowing

Before turning our attention to the specific cycles, we want to revisit an issue previously raised, namely, the multiple meanings of qualitative research. Typically, when students begin to study qualitative research, they press for precise definitions. In particular, they search for a single definition that will clarify the difference between qualitative and quantitative research. Although this quest is understandable, we contend that it is counterproductive. It is unlikely that the complex constellation of ideas associated with qualitative research will be reduced to a single, universally accepted definition.[3]

Therefore, we encourage students to let go of the *definitional* mode of knowing and enter into a *discursive* mode. By this we mean that qualitative research, like other fields of study, is comprised of many discourse communities—groups of thinkers/writers who share common assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how legitimate knowledge is generated through qualitative inquiry (see also Think Piece #3). As mentioned above, at least four major discourse communities are represented in the literature about qualitative research (empirical, interpretive, critical, and deconstructivist).[4] Beyond that, literature on qualitative research is being generated not only in the field of education, but also in disciplines such as sociology and anthropology.

Grasping the significance of different discourse communities within the field of qualitative research dramatically increases the intensity of students' learning and gives greater control over the learning process. We have never pinpointed any specific experience or information that precipitates this "light bulb" moment. Merely pointing out the coexistence of these various communities is certainly necessary but not sufficient. Responding to student questions from our own stance and encouraging them to recognize where they plant their feet may prompt ongoing attention to this issue. Ultimately, it seems that the breakthrough occurs as students grapple with their own studies and begin to find literature and scholars with whom they resonate.

Our Interpretive Perspective

Given the preceding comments about the importance of discourse communities, we would be remiss in launching into the body of this book without describing the perspectives we bring to the writing. First, we identify most strongly with

the interpretive tradition in qualitative research, an orientation that was both foreshadowed and strengthened by our formal study of literary criticism. Second, our most intensive and productive work has been with women doctoral students who share this proclivity for interpretive ways of knowing. Third, the students with whom we have worked most closely are educational practitioners, most of whom intend to remain in practitioner roles after completing their degree. This experience has contributed to our understanding of the interplay between theory and practice as well as the role of the dissertation in nurturing a scholarly stance in practitioners.

Although our passion is for qualitative/interpretive research, we see our responsibility as helping students to find the discourses and discourse communities that provide a supportive context for their inquiries. Both our passion for interpretive inquiry and our sense of respect for each individual's orientation to research underpin the writing of this book. It is our hope that students and faculty in education will find our perspective useful regardless of which qualitative tradition informs their work.

Acknowledgments

Over the years, our efforts to understand what it means to do a qualitative dissertation in education have been enriched by encounters with numerous students and colleagues. We would like to thank the following for their insightful reviews of the manuscript: Will Letts, University of Delaware; Colleen Thoma, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Betty Hubschman, Barry University, Florida; and Petros Pashiardis, University of Cyprus.

We are particularly indebted to the dissertation study group members, whose commitment to scholarship has engendered a deep belief in the personal meaning and value of the dissertation process. Each time we teach our introductory courses in qualitative and interpretive research, we invite members of the group to talk about their studies. One of our guest presenters always begins by commenting, "First, let me say that I loved doing my dissertation. It was a lot of work, and it was hard. But I truly enjoyed doing it." Inevitably, one or two class members will express a sense of both relief and gratitude when they hear this perspective. A recurring theme in dissertation folklore is a view that dissertations are academic hoops or arbitrary hurdles to be gotten over. Regrettably, this view is sometimes reinforced by well-meaning faculty who offer the advice, "Just do a small, manageable study to get done. Save *that* study for your life's work—after you've graduated." Although we hope that students will embrace the dissertation as a profoundly meaningful life event, we realize that this will not always be the case. But our experience with the study group convinces us that a counterpoint to the "dissertation hoops" mentality is warranted.

Maria Piantanida
Noreen B. Garman
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
October 1998

Notes

1. Given the diversity of materials and the steady stream of newly published books and articles on qualitative research, we have been able to cite only a small fraction of the excellent resources that are available. Therefore, our approach has been to flag references that can serve as entry points into the literature. To facilitate readers' locating this information, we have included one cumulative bibliography at the end of the book. Items in this bibliography are cited throughout the text to give newcomers a feel for which references might be useful for exploring various facets of qualitative research.

2. The concept of *heuristic* is important in qualitative research. The *Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (Bullock, Stallybrass, & Trombley, 1988) offers the following definition: "In social science, the term is used especially to characterize conceptual devices such as ideal types, models, and working hypotheses which are not intended to describe or explain the facts, but to suggest possible explanations or eliminate others" (p. 382). In brief, it is a conceptual representation of a phenomenon that conveys the complexity of the phenomenon in a way that makes it more accessible for discourse, deliberation, and inquiry. In the scientific tradition, hypotheses are one form of heuristic. In the arts and humanities, heuristics might take the form of visual or verbal images or metaphors.

3. Turning to a standard English dictionary for *the* definition of an unfamiliar concept or term can be indicative of a definitional orientation toward knowing. Although useful as a catalyst for thinking, such definitions do not offer a comprehensive picture of the discourses surrounding significant research terms. More useful starting points include research-oriented dictionaries and encyclopedias that place concepts within broader discourses. Examples include Blake and Hanley (1995), *The Dictionary of Educational Terms*; Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley (1988), *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought;* and Schwandt (1997), *Qualitative Inquiry: A Dictionary of Terms*.

4. Although we touch on the four qualitative research traditions in relation to the various cycles of deliberation, it goes beyond the scope and purpose of this book to provide an in-depth explanation of them. Think Piece #4, Tuning In to the Discourses on Qualitative Research, offers a starting point for thinking about the traditions and suggests several references that students often find helpful in orienting themselves to the field of qualitative research.

About the Authors

Maria Piantanida, PhD, is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. As a curriculum consultant, she has worked with a variety of programs for health and human services professionals. For her efforts to catalyze research among hospital-based educators, she received the 1989 Distinguished Author Award and the 1987 Distinguished Achievement Award from the American Society for Healthcare Education and Training. For the past 4 years, she has served as a reviewer for the journal *Qualitative Health Research.*

Noreen B. Garman, PhD, is Professor and Co-Director of the Institute for International Studies in Education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. A former high school English teacher and recent Fulbright scholar, Garman has published journal articles and chapters in the fields of clinical supervision, curriculum studies, and qualitative research. From 1994 to 1997, she directed programs for teacher education planning and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She has served on more than 70 dissertation committees during her career, and in 1994, she received an award from the American Educational Research Association, "For Mentoring Women and Activism in Women's Issues."

The authors' collaborative relationship spans more than two decades, first as student and teacher, then as doctoral candidate and advisor, and now as colleagues. With backgrounds in literary theory, literary criticism, and curriculum studies, they bring an interpretive perspective to qualitative research in education, exploring modes of inquiry that are particularly well suited to practice-based dissertation research. As co-facilitators of a qualitative dissertation study group, they have worked with more than 50 educational practitioners (teachers and administrators from elementary, secondary, and collegiate settings) using a variety of research methods including grounded theory, case study, heuristic inquiry, personal narrative, and arts-based research. As co-instructors of two graduate courses on qualitative research, Piantanida and Garman have gained a deep appreciation for doctoral students' struggles to develop a mind-set compatible with qualitative research. Together, they have given numerous presentations and workshops on qualitative dissertation research.

CHAPTER ONE

Cycles of Deliberation

The idea that work on the dissertation proceeds through cycles in which key issues are continually revisited can be quite jarring for students who operate from a linear or functionalist view of the process. From this perspective, one plans a study and then "implements" the plan. Within this planning model, one first identifies or chooses a topic and then selects a method. During the implementation phase, data are first collected, then analyzed, and then interpreted. Each step of the process is seen as occurring in an orderly sequence with a clear beginning and ending between each step.

In working with more than 50 doctoral candidates on qualitative dissertations, we have never experienced such a neat, idealized process. Nor have we seen students who, having mastered the skills of qualitative research, come to the dissertation ready to "apply" them. Rather, we see an evolutionary learning process much like that described by John Holt (1976):

> Another common and mistaken idea hidden in the word "learning" is that learning and doing are different kinds of acts. Thus, not many years ago I began to play the cello. I love the instrument, spend many hours a day playing it, work hard at it, and mean someday to play it well. Most people would say that what I am doing is "learning to play" the cello. Our language gives us no other words to say it. But these words carry into our minds the strange idea that there exist two very different processes: (1) learning to play the cello; and (2) playing the cello. They imply that I will do the first until I have completed it, at which point I will stop the first process and begin the second; in short, that I will go on "learning to play" until I have "learned to play" and that then I will begin "to play."
>
> Of course, this is nonsense. There are not two processes, but one. We learn to do something by doing it. There is no other way. (p. 13)

The concept of *cycles of deliberation* is meant to convey the messiness inherent in learning by doing. Furthermore, it depicts what we see as the essence of the dissertation process—that is, it is cyclical, iterative, deliberative, and discursive. Please note, we are not claiming that deliberation and discourse are the sole province of qualitative dissertations in education. Indeed, they are essential to

all good research. Rather, these concepts characterize an intellectual disposition or posture that better serves the dissertation process.

The next three sections of this chapter explain in greater depth what we mean by iterative cycles, deliberation, and discursive knowing. Through these explanations, we set forth the view that becoming a skillful qualitative researcher is less a matter of mastering techniques and more developing a deliberative posture. The final section of the chapter provides a thumbnail sketch of the overall dissertation process and raise issues about pacing and support for this intellectual marathon.

The Notion of Iterative Cycles

From our perspective, the notion of *iterative cycles* has at least four meanings. First, it connotes a learning process in which ideas associated with the dissertation are visited and revisited—potentially beginning with one's earliest doctoral coursework and possibly continuing beyond completion of one's degree. In this sense, students circle around topics or issues of interest to them, looking at them from different vantage points throughout their coursework and into their dissertation. Marge Logsdon, for example, entered her doctoral program with an interest in feminist issues, an interest she pursued by drawing upon feminist scholarship as she researched and wrote papers for various courses. Now nearing the dissertation, Marge is focusing on notions of authority and feminist pedagogy, a refinement that has emerged from her multiyear, multifaceted explorations of this area of study.

A second connotation of iterative cycles is a cyclical interplay between private ruminations and thinking aloud with others. We return to this meaning of iterative cycles in the discussions of deliberation and discourse later in this chapter.

A third meaning of iterative cycles refers to a continual interplay among personal knowledge grounded in experience, formal bodies of knowledge as represented in the literature, and data/information being gathered during the inquiry. This meaning challenges the linear view of planning a study that was mentioned previously and will be examined in more depth throughout the book.

Fourth is a cycling between the preparation of written documents and informal and formal reviews of those documents by others. Although progress through the dissertation is marked by the public review and approval of key documents (e.g., comprehensive/qualifying examination, research proposal, final dissertation), movement toward these milestones rarely occurs in a straight line. Viewing repeated cycling as false starts, blind alleys, or failed attempts can escalate frustration to debilitating proportions.

Inherent in a scholarly stance is a deliberative mind-set and a willingness to engage in discursive deliberation. In the next two sections, we illustrate these concepts with examples of students who exhibit varying capacities for deliberation and discourse. Think Piece #1 provides a more theoretical perspective of these concepts.

The Notion of Deliberation

Over the years, we have encountered students with a strong, and apparently innate, inclination for deliberation. Typically, they approach the dissertation with a nagging concern about some aspect of their practice. Hesitantly, sometimes wistfully, they wonder if their practice-focused concern might somehow be the topic for their dissertation. No practitioner brought this deliberative bent more clearly into focus for us than Micheline Stabile.[1] During the first year of her professional life, Micheline developed a deep and abiding concern for children who are labeled as failures by school systems even as their special educational needs are not being met by those systems. Therefore, she was both surprised and troubled when, 20 years later, she felt herself resisting the educational inclusion mandate sweeping through her district. When we began to work with Micheline, she was trying to make sense of what felt like a major anomaly in her professional beliefs and commitments. Gradually, she shaped a study that allowed her to deliberate more carefully and systematically about the problematics inherent in educational inclusion.

In many ways, Micheline typifies the deliberative posture we had come to expect from students who join our dissertation study group. Daphne provided an important reminder that the inclination for deliberation cannot be taken for granted. Daphne enjoyed talking about herself and her own ideas. She was deft at turning conversations into monologues, often focusing on obscure ideas, arcane information, or her own exotic international experiences. Regardless of the topic under consideration, Daphne quickly jumped in with an anecdote that simultaneously conveyed a sense of "been there, done that" and launched a harangue about her favorite subject—the subjugation of women by patriarchal power structures. Although she talked with great enthusiasm about doing her dissertation, she never settled on a topic, dug into the literature, or drafted a single page of a research proposal. Daphne's nondeliberative posture, which we characterized as The Academic Gadfly, stands in striking contrast to Marge's careful and prolonged study of feminist issues.

The inclination for deliberation—typically about one's practice—has emerged from our work with doctoral students as a key indicator of a capacity to enter into scholarly inquiry. Conversely, students who have bought into the folklore that the dissertation is merely an arbitrary "academic hoop" often approach their study as a task to be dispatched as quickly and expediently as possible. Alan and Ron exhibited this dysfunctional perspective in different yet equally extreme ways.

Alan approached his doctoral work as a series of academic hurdles. For him, the shortest distance between two points was a straight line to be traversed with minimal distractions or detours. Having dispatched his coursework, Alan bragged about "managing" his dissertation committee to preclude unnecessary and arbitrary impositions on his time. (Interestingly, Alan took about as long to complete his study as other students who started their research at the same time, yet he seemed reluctant, almost embarrassed, to share his dissertation with professional colleagues.)

Although less blatantly manipulative than Alan, Ron also longed to finish as quickly as possible. Skimming the surface of any subject under consideration, including the topic of his dissertation, Ron prompted us to coin The Teflon Syndrome as another variation of those who seem unable or unwilling to engage in thoughtful deliberation.

Much less intentional avoidance of deliberation occurs for many practitioners who are caught in the hectic pace and demands of work. Deliberation connotes a thoughtful contemplation of complex situations or ideas, often in conjunction with others. The unremitting pressure to get through an ever growing to-do list obviates against deliberation. Or, if one has limited time, deliberation may focus on difficulties embedded in practice. Contemplating the implications of those difficulties for research may be far less compelling.

A major thesis of this book is our belief that doctoral study in general, and the dissertation process in particular, are most productively approached with a deliberative posture. Careful attention to the process of the dissertation inquiry, rather than a frantic fixation on the end point, supports deliberation.

The Notion of Discursive Knowing

As indicated in the preface, we identify most strongly with the interpretive tradition of qualitative research. A key assumption of this tradition is that knowledge is socially constructed through discourse in interpretive communities. Given this epistemological orientation, we see a willingness to enter into discourse with others as an integral aspect of deliberation and inquiry. This gives rise to two key issues: (a) student willingness to engage in discourse, and (b) the availability of forums within which such discourse can occur.

We begin our exploration of these two issues from the context that has contributed most substantively to our thinking—our dissertation study group. This group functions as a mini-discourse community in which we and students can "think aloud" about their studies, and, in the process, students can acclimate to the scholarly process of public discourse.

For some students, joining the study group is like coming home to an intellectual safe haven. Here, in the company of like-minded students, they are able to share their nebulous ideas and "talk their way to clarity." Illustrative of this response is the following comment by one study group member:

> I don't know what I would do without the study group. Prior to my contact with the study group, my dissertation was just another "hoop" to jump though. Now, I'm excited about my work and, more importantly, I have learned a great deal. Not only about my topic, but also about qualitative research, scholarly discussions, and writing in general. I am grateful to all of the members of the study group who have made this phase of my education so productive and worthwhile.

Periodically, however, even seasoned group members talk about how scary this mode of learning can be. So often in doctoral courses and work settings, it is important to show only one's competence and confidence. Revealing self-doubts, uncertainty, awkwardness, and skill deficiencies is risky. A willingness to be vulnerable does not come easily. For some students, it is virtually impossible.

Angie and Eric come to mind when we think of students who resist engagement in discursive deliberation. As members of an introductory class in qualitative research, they seemed to have breezed through earlier coursework without giving much thought to the implications of concepts or issues being studied. They conveyed an aura of "psyching out" instructors' expectations and delivering products that might meet the letter, but not the spirit, of assignments. When discussing their program of studies, they seemed to view it as a collection of courses and accumulated credits, rather than a well-reasoned agenda for their own learning. When Angie and Eric described their reasons for pursuing a doctorate, they focused on extrinsic rewards, relishing the prestige associated with the title or anticipating the opportunities for salary increases and job advancement. Angie and Eric exhibited little patience with "all this talk," viewing discussions with fellow students as inefficient or a waste of time. Their comments were often tinged with disdain for their peers as well as for academic or scholarly discourse.

Whereas Angie and Eric remained disengaged from both deliberation and discourse, Priscilla made great sacrifices in order to labor over her dissertation. In the process, however, she increasingly isolated herself from any discourse community. Her isolation, in turn, seemed to fuel a growing sense of bitterness over a perceived lack of support for or appreciation of her scholarly endeavors.

Joining a study group is no panacea for engendering discourse. Over the years, a number of students have attended one or two meetings of our group and never returned.[2] Some students have attended meetings for extended periods of time but have been unable to contribute to the discussions, either about their own work or the work of others. Several other students have attended meetings but shared their work in ways that forestall rather than invite meaningful deliberation. Thus, postures toward deliberative discourse run the gamut from extremely disengaged to deeply engaged. The following remarks from two study group members serve to illustrate what we see as the contribution of discourse to deliberation and, in turn, to completing a dissertation.

> *Student 1:* I am learning how to listen to others and to express my opinions about the problems that they bring to the study group meetings. I am also learning how to more accurately pinpoint my own difficulties and to express them to others. I have learned to talk very confidently about my study. When someone new comes to the group, everyone introduces herself to the newcomer and briefly describes her study. Every time I do this, I get better at capturing the essence of my work. Because there are others in the study group farther along in the process than I am, I learn from listening to them about what lies ahead of me. I profit from my peers' suggestions and advice as I move through what they have already

> experienced. Watching others has helped me to feel confident that when I reach that part in the process, I, too, will pass through it. I am continually learning what it means to be a part of a community of scholars.
>
> *Student 2:* The study group has the characteristics of a community of scholars. As such, it is dialogical in nature having lateral communal relations rather than top-down rigid control. Every member in the study group is free to express herself with no problem being too trivial to be discussed and dealt with. Requests for assistance are met with genuine information sharing. The communication that goes on in this study group can be characterized as honest, sincere attempts on everyone's part to help each other through the dissertation process.

Although the study group has been a productive and rewarding forum for engendering a sense of scholarly discourse, we recognize that this option may not be feasible for all students and faculty. Think Piece #2 suggests several alternatives through which students might attend to this important aspect of the dissertation.

The Cycles of Deliberation—A Thumbnail Sketch

Each spring, Pittsburgh hosts a 26-mile marathon, requiring runners to traverse fairly hilly terrain as they weave through the city's many ethnically diverse neighborhoods. Although for years we had seen snippets of the race on television, actually joining the throngs of cheering spectators on one exceptionally hot and humid May morning had a powerful emotional impact. The outpouring of support for those who chose to run this grueling race was a palpable force along the crowded streets. Support came in various forms. Outreached hands offered fruit, energy bars, and cups of water and juice. Garden hoses provided cooling showers. But most compelling of all were the shouts of encouragement. Some clearly came from family and friends who called by name to specific runners. Most, however, came from strangers as encouragement was directed to the runners' numbers, often to someone whose energy seemed to be flagging. And the air was filled with general shouts of "You can do it"; "Go for it"; "You're more than halfway there"; "You're looking good"; and "Keep it up." The runners themselves did not break stride, make eye contact, or give any indication that the messages of encouragement penetrated their fierce concentration. Yet surely they must have been sustained in some measure by the tunnel of supportive energy through which they ran.

Even as we were caught up in the excitement of the moment, we contemplated the parallels to the dissertation. Clearly, some individuals are drawn to the challenge of the marathon, whereas others are not. Yet even those who would never dream of running a marathon themselves care about the success of those who do choose to run. There is something compelling about watching the struggles and, hopefully, triumphs of those who are willing to undertake an extra-

ordinary challenge. And although no one can run the race for someone else, a great deal can be done to encourage and support that effort. We use this marathon analogy to raise two important issues—pacing oneself through the process and mobilizing support.

Pacing

Shaping a qualitative dissertation in education occurs as students immerse themselves in deliberations, grappling with interconnections among all facets of the inquiry—that is, one's self as researcher, the intent of the inquiry, the inquiry process, and relevant discourses. In our experience, it does not seem to matter which facet of the inquiry one begins to consider first. What does matter is attending continually to all facets of the study. Sometimes, this feels like skipping around without focus, or like blindly shuffling pieces of the study. But puzzling over the connections among the various facets of the inquiry is what finally allows one to fit pieces together. Each time this happens, students enter another, deeper cycle of deliberation.

Although it is not possible to predict how many iterations of deliberation must occur for a student to move from one cycle to the next, we have identified an overall pattern that seems to recur. We have characterized this pattern as seven major cycles of deliberation that fall roughly into four phases (Figure 1.1). These phases are defined by a combination of time and intensity of conceptual effort. The beginning phase often lasts longer than the subsequent phases. The ending phase, although often the shortest in time, is the most intense in terms of conceptual concentration. The transitional phase, although occurring after completing the degree, often entails another cycle of coming to grips with the meaning of the dissertation and doctorate in one's life.

The beginning phase encompasses the first four cycles of deliberation, starting as students face the dissertation and ending with the committee's approval of the proposal for the study. Typically, the most difficult and frustrating aspect of this phase is honing a viable topic and purpose for the dissertation. The overall length of this phase can vary tremendously. We have seen students take as long as 2 years to prepare themselves emotionally and mentally to face the dissertation. This is a bit extreme. To a great extent, the overall length of this phase is influenced by the time spent immersing oneself in literature and drafting ideas for the research proposal. Although talking about ideas is necessary, it is not sufficient to get to a viable study.

The middle phase encompasses the initial work of living with the study. This is a time when researchers work intensively with the data of their study—gathering relevant information, doing preliminary analyses or interpretations of the information, trying out various formats for displaying the data, and grappling with the meaning of the data. When it comes to many of the action-oriented tasks of this cycle, researchers have some control over its length of time. For example, if a researcher is scheduling interviews, he or she can set either an ambitious or a leisurely schedule. There is, however, an aspect of this cycle that is not controllable. It is reaching an "aha" moment in which the meaning and results of

Beginning Phase

Facing the Dissertation
Moving Into the Dissertation
Crafting the Research Proposal
Proposing the Study

Middle Phase

Living With the Study—Getting to Portrayals

Ending Phase

Living With the Study—Crafting Portrayals
Entering Into Public Discourse—The Dissertation Meeting

Transitional Phase

Adjusting to Life After the Dissertation

Figure 1.1. Phases of the Dissertation: Cycles of Deliberation

the study come into focus. The more intensively researchers immerse themselves in their data and grapple with its meaning, the greater the likelihood of their precipitating the aha moment. But in the end, this is an act of conceptual creativity that cannot be controlled.

The ending phase occurs after the aha moment and encompasses the latter half of living with the study. During this time, the researcher is crafting the final dissertation document, submitting the document for committee review, and wrapping up the requirements for graduation.

The transitional phase alludes to a period of adjustment that often seems to follow the flurry of activity associated with finishing the dissertation and graduation. Rebalancing one's personal, professional, and intellectual life after the dissertation can occur in a matter of weeks, months, or years.

We organize the cycles of deliberation into these broad phases to underscore the issue of pacing. Too often, we see students expend tremendous amounts of time and energy in the beginning and middle phases, exhausting their mental, emotional, and sometimes financial resources just when they need them the most. For example, we have known more than one student who took a leave of absence to collect data, an intellectual task that often can be juggled along with one's work responsibilities. Those who are able to take a leave would be far better advised to save this precious resource until they are grappling intensively with the data and crafting the results of the study.

It is important to apportion one's time and energy throughout the process. Like running a marathon, one does not want to peak too early. Likewise, one may need to allow some time for recovery after such a strenuous race has been run.

Mobilizing Support

As with running a marathon, support for the dissertation can take many forms, from enthusiastic cheering to careful coaching. Sometimes, family and friends want to be supportive, but because they have never experienced the dissertation process, they are at a loss as to how to be helpful. By brainstorming a wish list of desired help (e.g., emotional/psychological support, support for learning about qualitative research, financial support, and support with tasks of daily living), students can identify specific needs and begin to assemble a support team.

Sometimes, support (or the lack of support) comes from unexpected places. We are reminded of one student who did not mention her husband in her acknowledgments. Throughout the dissertation process, he had continually undermined her efforts. It was her mother-in-law who offered the most tangible support, providing extra child care, doing grocery shopping, and preparing meals that could be quickly reheated. As this anecdote illustrates, it is not only the student who is invested in the dissertation. Over time, we have come to see that friends, relatives, and colleagues may also take more than a passing interest in one's dissertation.

Although intentional undermining of another person's dissertation is probably rare, well-meant but misplaced assistance can create obstacles. For example, one member of our study group, a highly committed school administrator, finally came to the difficult decision to take a leave of absence so that she could concentrate on the final conceptualization and writing of a highly complex dissertation. Her leave was scheduled to begin July 1, but her supervisor "generously" suggested that she should feel free to continue wrapping up loose ends past this date. What appears on the surface to be a helpful suggestion to alleviate work-related pressure might actually be detrimental. There are always loose ends to tie up, and delaying the start of this conscientious employee's leave of absence could throw off her pacing, break her concentration, and erode the precious and limited time available to finish the dissertation.

Students who band together in support groups but spend most of their time relating dissertation horror stories or complaining about "meaningless academic hoops" are also caught in a potentially debilitating dynamic. There is a fine line between whining about a difficult undertaking and a sense of support arising from the camaraderie of a shared challenge.

On more than one occasion, we have met students who seem ready, willing, and able to embark on a marathon. Yet they have been advised by family, friends, and even faculty to "avoid the race." This advice is rarely blatant, but more often takes the form of comments such as, "Remember, the dissertation isn't your life's work. Do something small and manageable. Do *that* study once you've got the doctorate."

Without prompting undue paranoia, we encourage students to think about the people who may have a vested interest either in their "staying the course" or "abandoning the race." Surrounding oneself with the former can be tremendously sustaining. Avoiding the latter can be liberating. As we lay out issues

arising during each cycle of deliberation, we hope that readers will be better able to discern what constitutes genuinely useful support.

Notes

1. Throughout the book, we mention various students to illustrate points or issues about the dissertation process. Most of the names are fictional; several, however, are real in order to facilitate access to dissertations that may be of interest to readers. Those who are introduced by their full names have generously granted us permission to share their dissertation experiences.

2. Because several of these students were men, we wonder at times if our particular form of discursive deliberation is associated with a feminist way of knowing. Although we have not studied this speculation systematically, feedback from men who have heard us speak at conferences suggests that the proclivity for discourse is not readily explained simply on the basis of gender.

CHAPTER TWO

Facing the Dissertation

As students near the end of doctoral coursework, the stage is set for the first cycle of deliberation, what we refer to as *facing the dissertation*. Flagging this task as a distinct cycle might seem odd, because the dissertation requirement should come as no surprise to doctoral students. Yet the presumption that movement from coursework to the dissertation is effortless underestimates the evocative power of this thing called *the dissertation*.

Over the years, we have met a number of students for whom the dissertation has symbolic meanings apart from its academic purpose as a demonstration of scholarly ability. An experience that Maria had more than 10 years ago lingers as a vivid reminder of the emotional undercurrents that may be swirling beneath the task of the dissertation (Exemplar 2.1).

At the heart of this first cycle of deliberation is the task of making an intellectual and emotional commitment to doing a dissertation. Making this commitment seems to entail a growing sense of confidence that "I can do this." Therefore, under the heading of Precommitment Anxiety, we explore several issues that seem to affect students' confidence in tackling the dissertation.

Although our notion of iterative cycles is intended to blur the conceptual boundaries between phases of doctoral work (e.g., coursework, comprehensive or qualifying examination, research proposal, dissertation), we are constantly amazed at the number of students who have little understanding of how these fit together. Under the heading of The Meaning of Doctoral Study, we suggest writing a think piece as one way of beginning to face the dissertation process.

In our experience, as students begin to face the dissertation, they tend to think first in terms of potential topics. Practitioners often draw upon personal work experience as a source of topics. Although this can be a fertile context for generating ideas, it is also fraught with potential pitfalls. In a section called Deliberations About Topic, we use a puddle metaphor to alert students to both the value of drawing from one's practice and the pitfalls of doing so. A posture of "deliberative curiosity" is suggested as a safeguard.

Deliberative curiosity cannot be cultivated in isolation, nor can a viable dissertation inquiry. Ideas drawn from one's idiosyncratic experience must be examined in relation to broader discourses related to both the topic and the

EXEMPLAR 2.1 The Emotional Power of the Dissertation

Several years after completing my dissertation, I conducted a workshop on practice-based research at the hospital where I worked. Among the participants was a nurse who had completed all of her doctoral courses and, as she put it, "needed to gear up for the dissertation." She claimed that the workshop was energizing, and she had regained her enthusiasm for finishing the degree.

Periodically, we would meet in the hospital corridors, and in an effort to be supportive, I would ask, "How's the dissertation going?" Inevitably, she replied, "I'm going to be meeting with my advisor and get started. It's just that work keeps me so busy right now, I'm having trouble finding time for it."

After several of these exchanges, I began to notice that when I posed my question about her dissertation, my colleague's eyes would sort of roll up under her eyelids; she would avert her face, almost speaking to me over her shoulder. With that realization, I stopped asking. But the image of her contorted face continued to haunt me. Eventually, I came to speculate that it was the dissertation, not me, that she couldn't bear to face. How painful, I thought, to be paralyzed—unable to move either forward into the dissertation process or to walk away from it.

Authors' Commentary: Over the years, we have met a number of students who appear to be stuck in this fashion. Often, they seem to fade away until one day, we suddenly say, "I wonder what ever happened to so-and-so." From our perspective, it is regrettable if students passively avoid the dissertation until they run out of time. In essence, they make a decision through their inaction. Are they, we wonder, haunted by a sense of unfinished business, or worse, failure? We know of two instances in which students seemed to make a deliberate and well-reasoned decision to remain ABD—all but dissertation. In one case, the demands and rewards of fatherhood seemed to override the importance of the dissertation. In the other case, the student talked quite explicitly about his distaste for writing and his feeling that he was already doing what mattered to him professionally. Whatever benefit might accrue from holding the title of "doctor" was not worth the personal turmoil of writing. These two individuals seem at peace with their decision not to complete the dissertation. We hope that others exercise their right to choose to stop after completing their doctoral coursework. Running a marathon is not for everyone, and feeling trapped into doing a dissertation is not likely to be a productive or satisfying experience. If one chooses to move in some other personal or professional direction, we hope they and their family and friends take time to mark this transition. Choosing to stop or change direction need not be a sign of weakness, failure, or quitting. Indeed, having the wisdom to know one's own mind and the courage to act on that knowledge is cause for celebration.

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inquiry process. For many students, facing the dissertation entails at least a preliminary exploration of what it means to do a qualitative inquiry. During this cycle, the aim is not to "master" qualitative research but to determine whether one wants to enter into a far more intensive, deliberative learning process. In the sec-

tion on Evolving a Personal Research Profile, we flag a range of issues with which students must grapple as they shape a viable dissertation. As a working document, the *Personal Research Profile* provides a focal point for connecting individual ideas with broader discourses and initiating discursive deliberation between student and advisor.

Precommitment Anxiety

In the preface and Chapter 1, we have alluded to academic folklore that imbues the dissertation with an aura of mystery. Students may not know the details of doing a dissertation, but they know that it is a *BIG DEAL*. The sense of importance and mystery associated with the dissertation can generate considerable anxiety that, in turn, may undermine even the most able student's sense of confidence. A number of issues seem to contribute to this sense of dissertation jitters.

At a workshop for students who had been avoiding the dissertation for several years, we asked participants to write a reflection on "what comes to mind when you think about doing the dissertation." A content analysis of these writings yielded a set of weighty issues that can contribute to predissertation anxiety (Figure 2.1) and, in turn, create a vulnerability to several pitfalls.

The Infinitely Receding Horizon Phenomenon

For at least some students, the dissertation is a distant aspect of doctoral work. Vaguely, they know it is something they will eventually have to get to, but like Scarlett O'Hara, they'll think about it tomorrow. The tendency to put off thinking about the dissertation came more fully to our attention as we read the passage in Exemplar 2.2, an excerpt from a student think piece on the meaning of the dissertation. No matter how imminent the dissertation becomes, it always seems to be receding, like the shimmering horizon at the end of a long, straight highway.

Counterproductive Dichotomy

This Receding Horizon Phenomenon may be reinforced when students dichotomize their doctoral program into coursework and dissertation. Some students, as illustrated in the following comment, tend to manage their anxiety by maintaining a very narrow focus:

> I have approached the whole doctoral degree as "a need to know" process. By that I mean I think about the next step when I need to take it. In the beginning of my pursuit of the degree, I never looked at the catalog to determine how many credits I would need to take. If I had looked to see that it would take 90 credits to complete the degree, I may not have gone any further. I know from talking to persons with the doctoral degree that a dissertation is part of the process, and that was enough to scare me.

Impact on lifestyle/quality of life
Financial factors
Payoffs/value
Commitment, ownership, sacrifices
Conflicting obligations/priorities
Support
Committee factors/relationships
Time/energy factors
Discipline/pacing
Avoidance behaviors
Performance/competence issues
Emotional reactions

Figure 2.1. Issues of Concern

An overly narrow fixation on THE DISSERTATION may heighten the anxiety associated with tackling the dissertation by obscuring intermediate steps (e.g., qualifying examinations, the research proposal) that move students into the process. Awareness of these requirements, however, is no guarantee of understanding their relationship to each other or their significance for the inquiry process. This seems especially true when such requirements are seen as meaningless academic hurdles intended only to complicate life and impede attainment of one's degree.

Painful Fussing

Another issue that arises during this time of transition is raised in an e-mail from Micheline, whom we've already introduced. Micheline and Marilyn Llewellyn, two study group members who have approached the dissertation as conscientiously as any students we have known, had set up a standing library night to provide some structure and accountability for their inquiry process. Over time, they had invited other students to join them, and the following note alludes to a conversation with Ted, a recent addition to the library group:

> Maria, your note about rescuing others from the struggles of the dissertation brings up a wonderfully relevant interaction that I had last night at the library with Marilyn and Ted. Ted seems in such misery over how to get a focus for his study, a pain all too familiar to me. I think of the place Paula, Ted, and Kitty are (at the very beginning) as probably the most frustrating, anxiety-provoking, miserable, unpleasant, and painful part of this whole process. It elicits such empathy in me. At any rate, as I sat listening and trying to respond to Ted's machinations for over 45 min-

EXEMPLAR 2.2 The Receding Horizon Phenomenon

Hard to believe that I am at the point in my academic career that I am giving serious thought to my comprehensive examination. It seemed (and to some extent still seems) like such a long way off. Just another step in the process, I believed, when I first heard the word "comps" posed to me in casual conversation by fellow classmates. Casual conversation as bantered about when asking, "Where are you in the process?" And getting answers like, "I'm in the process of completing my comps" or "I just finished my comps"—to me that just meant they were pretty close to finishing up. As I reflect now, I'm not sure what it was I thought they were close to finishing—their coursework? Their actual dissertations? All I can say I thought for sure was that they were a step closer to "finishing."

Now as I draw closer to this stage of the comprehensive examination myself, I am giving much thought as to what it really does mean and what it is I'll "have to do." In discussions with my advisor, I'd have to say that it is still not crystal clear.

I am still thinking in terms of the fact that it is a long way off for me though my Intro to Qualitative Research class has been putting the whole notion of actually writing a dissertation much more into perspective for me. Given the fact that I have only two more classes to go before completing my coursework, I'm getting a bit antsy about not having a topic just yet. It is only within the last two weeks that I have seriously thought about the direction my inquiry will take to find that topic of mine.

Authors' Commentary: Note the student's tendency to persist in seeing doctoral requirements as a long way off, even though she has only two more courses to complete. She may sustain the illusion of distance by shifting her focus from the more imminent requirement (the comprehensive examination that is the initial focus in this writing) to the more remote dissertation. Making this shift may postpone the task of coming to grips with the comprehensive examination, which, she says, "is still not crystal clear."

We speculate that the expectation for crystal clarity is indicative more of a functionalist than a deliberative mind-set. The expectation, it seems, is for the advisor to supply a precise description of the comprehensive examination. If such a set of instructions is not forthcoming, does the student perpetuate the folklore about the mystery surrounding doctoral requirements, rather than seeing this as an issue for discussion and deliberation?

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utes during what was supposed to be library time, Marilyn joined in. Actually in her attempt to rescue me from rescuing she became ensnared. Micheline

We, too, are familiar with this impulse to rescue students from the pain of their machinations—an impulse prompted by a mixture of initial empathy and growing impatience as we begin to wonder, "Why don't you just get on with it?" For some students, a reluctance to commit to a particular topic or focus delays their progress in facing the dissertation.

Inner Doubts

A reflection written by Paula (the student mentioned in Micheline's e-mail) provides some insight into another issue in this facing-the-dissertation cycle, an issue that can prolong the painful fussing:

> Up to this point [the second night of a qualitative research course], I had never read a dissertation. In my mind, I imagined these foreboding, black-bound books to be boring, full of hard to decipher statistics, and having little relevance to classroom practice. I picked up one of the dissertations and read the title, *Pictures in Our Minds: A Narrative Study of Creative Dramatics as Pedagogy in Elementary Classroom Content Areas*. It intrigued me, and so I borrowed it.
>
> That night, instead of watching television, I sat down to read the dissertation. I found that I could not put it down. It read like a story and was full of accounts that I could relate to as a teacher. I kept asking myself "Are you really allowed to do this?" I couldn't believe that a teacher was allowed to write about her classroom—or creative dramatics—or even a narrative. That evening I felt a sense of relief—yes, maybe even I could write a dissertation. Up to now, the whole process seemed daunting to me.

Students who have been socialized into projecting an image of confidence may not share their inner doubts and fears about tackling the dissertation. Interestingly, the dissertation that Paula found so reassuring was written by Lynn Richards (1996a), who wrote the following recollection several months after completing her doctorate:

> For the past seven years, I had worked steadily towards my goal of completing a doctoral degree in the field of education. The traditional university requirements of coursework, preliminaries, and competency exam had provided markers of my progress along the academic way. As I left the comfortable deadline-driven role of student and began my role as an independent researcher and scholar, I was often disturbed by an overwhelming sense of inadequacy and an embarrassing lack of direction. Although I had "chosen my topic" of dissertation inquiry—creative dramatics—and had been gathering information about narrative as a method of inquiry—I knew little of how to weave the two together in the construction of an acceptable dissertation.

The anxiety voiced by Paula and Lynn is more common among students than we had ever imagined. Often, students who outwardly appear confident are secretly wracked with fears. In fact, to us, Lynn had seemed to progress through the process with amazing efficiency and aplomb. We were stunned when she shared the following story several months after masterfully defending her study:

> My father obtained his Ph.D. in 1954 in the field of research psychology. I completed my Ed.D. in 1996 in the field of creative dramatics. The title of my dissertation is *Pictures in Our Minds*. In *my mind* I carry an image of a photograph of my father in his doctoral graduation gown and mortarboard holding his rolled Ph.D. I stand in front of him, a small toddler in a white dress and sun hat. This omnipresent mental image led me to a dilemma 40 years later—how to find a common language between father and daughter—between quantitative and qualitative researcher. For the most part, my father and I had been careful to "dance" around our research biases and to silently agree that different methods suit different inquiries.
>
> Shortly after I had asked the study group for help in the structure of a proposal, I received a box full of expensive books addressing qualitative research design in the mail from an anonymous sender. I was certain that the study group had taken up a collection in an attempt to "educate" this unsophisticated, unscholarly elementary school teacher. I was so disturbed by my self-perspective of my own feminine academic incompetence that I sat in the closet and cried. Days later during a phone conversation with my mother, I discovered that it was my father who had selected, ordered, paid for and sent the qualitative research material. I was both relieved and surprised for it never occurred to me that my father would have the interest in or access to such detailed interpretive inquiry materials. (Richards, 1996b)

A major aspect of facing the dissertation is letting go of potentially debilitating doubts and fears or finding ways not to ignore—but to manage—them. Although a certain amount of empathy from friends and faculty is certainly called for and welcome, support for prolonged wallowing in anxiety is counterproductive. From our perspective, the most useful way for students to ease into dissertation commitment is through writing. Indeed, persistent unwillingness to write is probably the strongest indicator we have of a student's reluctance to face the dissertation. The remaining sections of this chapter suggest several writing activities that can support a transition from painful machinations to commitment.

The Meaning of Doctoral Study

Typically, anytime we teach our introductory course in qualitative research, the class is comprised of students at all stages of doctoral study. Some are just beginning their program, whereas others are nearing the end of their coursework, preparing for comprehensive examinations, or writing the proposal for their dissertation. Sometimes, students are well into their study and are looking for help in analyzing qualitative data. Students also bring widely varied backgrounds in research to the course. For some, this is their first research course, whereas others may have extensive backgrounds in one or more research approaches.

Our aim is to initiate a process of deliberation and discourse among such a heterogeneous group of students whose members often perceive that they have little in common with their classmates. To this end, we ask students to write a think piece on one of the following questions—the one most relevant to their stage of doctoral study:

- What is the meaning of doctoral study?
- What is the meaning of a plan/program of studies?
- What is the comprehensive examination meant to demonstrate?
- What is the research proposal meant to demonstrate?
- What is the dissertation meant to demonstrate?

This assignment serves several ends. At a minimum, it calls attention to the steps in the process—it brings the horizon closer. At the same time, it challenges the assumption that these are meaningless academic hurdles or hoops by suggesting that they do have a meaning. As class members share their writing with each other, the assignment also engenders lively discourse. Students, hungry for information about the dissertation process, are eager to hear from those who are farther along. These students often express relief that others share their confusion and uncertainty. Students who have completed various requirements help to demystify the process by sharing their experiences and offering advice. This process of articulating lessons learned is often surprisingly affirming to these students as they suddenly realize how much progress they have made.

For us, the discussions provide openings to talk about preconceptions and misconceptions. Overly narrow or prescriptive advice can be reframed from idiosyncratic experiences into more generic issues associated with conceptualizing and conducting an inquiry. Requirements like the program of studies, qualifying examinations, and proposal become less tasks to be completed and forgotten and more processes that prepare students for the dissertation.

Through these exchanges, students also begin to realize that expectations for completing requirements vary from department to department within our school of education. When students from other schools within the university register for the course, variations in dissertation requirements become even more evident. The potential danger of overgeneralizing from any one piece of information or for taking all advice at face value becomes more apparent. Questions begin to come into focus, and new possibilities for working with an academic/research advisor begin to emerge.

Above all else, however, this assignment helps to break the ice—engaging students in deliberation and discourse about their own thinking. Students quickly realize that there are no simple answers to the wealth of issues raised in their writings.

We have couched this exercise in the context of a research course in case faculty reading this book might want to adapt it to their instruction. But students could also do this writing privately as a journal entry or as a think piece to catalyze discussion with their advisor or peers. We raise one caution, however. The

exercise should be used as a vehicle for surfacing *and* examining tacit assumptions about doctoral study. It will be counterproductive if used to fuel an attitude of "ain't it awful what they make us go through?"

Deliberations on Topic

Getting in Touch With a Topic

In the halls of academe, "Have you *found* a topic yet?" is a common query directed toward those nearing the end of their doctoral coursework. "*Choose* a manageable topic" are common words of advice. Such comments tend to focus attention outward, suggesting that topics can be stumbled across or selected from an existing buffet of options.

An alternative, then, is to talk about *shaping* a dissertation. This notion stems from our belief that novice scholars have within themselves embryonic images that can be fashioned into credible and worthy studies. The task is not to *look for* or *choose* a topic, but rather to get in touch with these nebulous, inner images and to bring them into clearer relief.[1]

What, then, is a starting point for this shaping process? Often, committed practitioners who are pursuing doctoral degrees come to the dissertation from one of two stances—outrage over some perceived inadequacy or zeal for some perceived intervention. We represent these as *the human dilemma puddle* and *the practitioner intervention puddle* (see Figure 2.2).

The Human Dilemma Puddle

The earliest expressions of a dissertation topic are often couched in terms of a desire to take corrective action toward some person, situation, or event. Not uncommonly, such expressions are tinged with indignation or outrage over some perceived affront or injustice. One young woman remains a vivid example of this approach to the dissertation:

> When asked about her topic, she stated quite vehemently, "I want to develop a course to teach college administrators how to communicate." Upon further probing, she described her work situation where a supervisor had encouraged staff members to suggest ways to improve their department. When suggestions were made, however, the supervisor ignored them and maintained the status quo, predictably resulting in lower employee morale. The young woman was personally affronted that her suggestions had been dismissed and had concluded that supervisors in general do not know how to communicate effectively with their employees. Her solution was to use her dissertation to design a communication skills training program that could rectify this perceived managerial incompetence.

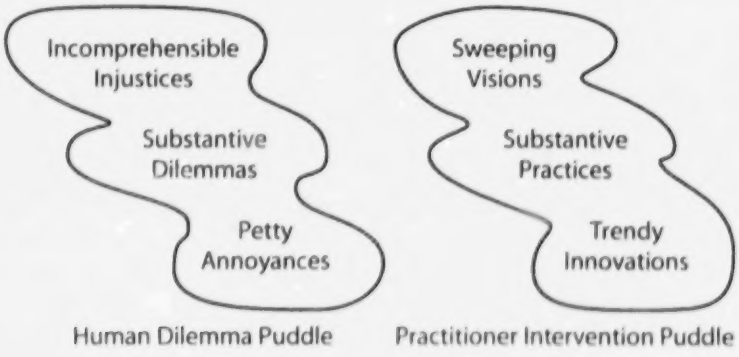

Figure 2.2. "The Puddles"

Another example comes from the arena of health education, where we cannot keep track of all the students who define THE PROBLEM for their research as a lack of organizationally sponsored wellness programs. In so many words, they say:

> My work organization doesn't have a stress management program. We know that work-related stress can cause all sorts of problems—risk for heart attack, absenteeism, lower productivity. For my study, I want to design and implement a stress management program.

Such intentions do not constitute viable dissertation research. Yet giving this feedback often fuels even greater vehemence about the need to make others see that a problem exists. Over the years, we have come to realize that these rather naive comments often represent the earliest attempts to articulate an incipient research topic. This brought us to the notion of the human dilemma puddle.

In the course of their personal and professional lives, practitioners often find themselves immersed in perplexing and confusing circumstances. Many times, it is difficult to pinpoint the source of their consternation, but a nagging feeling persists—something is wrong, something doesn't make sense. The human dilemma puddle is meant to convey a fundamental assumption—that is, embedded within this amorphous conglomeration of troublesome and troubling experiences are often important dilemmas that warrant serious study.

As Figure 2.2 illustrates, these human dilemmas range from the petty to the profound. Petty annoyances are irksome or frustrating but essentially trivial. As irritating as they might be, in the scheme of the universe, such dilemmas seem inconsequential (e.g., Why won't my supervisor listen to me? Why won't my company sponsor a stress management course?).

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the virtually incomprehensible dilemmas of human existence (e.g., violence in the schools, inequities in schooling, racial prejudice, and social oppression). Most of us shake our heads and

wonder, "How can such things happen? How can this be?" Some students come to the dissertation with a desire to ameliorate such human ills through their research.

In the middle ground lie substantive dilemmas usually embedded in the student's practice. These dilemmas are often characterized by a vehement, even angry, desire to fix something, take corrective action, or improve a situation. Underlying the specific circumstances are such basic questions as, What's going on here? What does all this mean? What can be done? What should be done? Action oriented and focused on issues of substance, such dilemmas have the potential to be consequential and meaningful, not just to the researcher but also to other practitioners.

The Practitioner Intervention Puddle

If outrage is the stance represented by the human dilemma puddle, zeal is the stance of the intervention puddle. At the trendy innovation end of the continuum, this stance manifests as wide-eyed wonder over some relatively narrow innovation—often a particular technique, program, or model. Students convey a "Gee whiz! Ain't it great!" attitude and want their dissertation to convince the rest of the world to embrace their particular intervention. Illustrative of this situation was a student we fondly remember as the Van Lady.

> The Van Lady was a health educator who had recently been involved with a health promotion program in which a mobile van toured through communities whose citizens would not otherwise have access to wellness services. With unbridled enthusiasm, she wanted to write her dissertation as a grant proposal to obtain funding to replicate this service in other parts of the state.

Students operating from this stance often have a missionary zeal for promulgating their innovation throughout the educational community. Encouragement to tie their study to underlying theoretical issues falls on deaf ears. When such students perceive disinterest or resistance to their topic, they may slip into the dilemma puddle, deeply resenting that their gift to the world is unappreciated.

At the opposite end of the continuum are students who want their dissertations to catalyze sweeping educational or social reform. Underlying such grandiose visions is often a deep-seated commitment to an educational principle or philosophy. Such students remind us of Robert Kennedy's eloquent statement, "Some men [sic] see things as they are and ask why; I dream of things that aren't, and ask why not." Lurking within the students' sweeping visions are intimations of what might be.[2]

The middle of the intervention puddle encompasses an array of substantive methods or techniques that students may be using in their practice. Typically, these students are well-regarded practitioners who have an intuitive sense of what works. They approach the dissertation with a sincere and heartfelt desire to explain their practice for the benefit of others.[3]

The Role of Outrage and Zeal

Tierney and Lincoln (1994), in discussing the teaching of qualitative research, comment that

> when we study our own culture, we need to create a subjective distance so that we do not merely record data from an insider's point of view. Indeed, as Margaret Mead has noted, "If a fish were to become an anthropologist, the last thing it would discover would be water" (in Spindler 1982, p. 4). (p. 111)

The sense of outrage or zeal can serve as a catalyst for helping us to "notice the water." What others have taken for granted or overlooked can be brought to conscious awareness by the sense of outrage or wonder. This awareness can be a starting point for shaping a study. The challenge for both students and their advisors is to slosh around in the puddle long enough to tease out, to bring into relief, a viable study.

Periodically, we encounter students who are well into their dissertations but seem to have little enthusiasm for or ownership of their research. Often, they have been referred to our dissertation study group because they have been stuck in the process for several years and are having trouble bringing their project to closure. When we explore their situation, it is not uncommon to discover that early in the process, the student had been sloshing around in the profound dilemma or sweeping reform part of the puddle and were advised by well-meaning faculty to choose a smaller, more manageable project or to change topics entirely. (Sadly, we meet far fewer students who have been advised to abandon a trivial problem or trendy innovation in favor of a more substantive issue.)

We have begun to speculate that such students bog down in the process because they are working against their own resistance. Having had no opportunity to come to grips with their original idea, they harbor regrets about the study that might have been or resentment about doing "someone else's study." Ironically, it often seems that either the student or the advisor—or both—were so anxious to "get on" with the study that insufficient time was devoted to sloshing around in the puddle. The price for expediency in choosing a topic seems to be paid in the time it takes to complete the dissertation.

The sloshing process entails a movement from simplistic reaction toward a posture of deliberative inquiry. Without such movement, students can fall into traps illustrated by the continuum in Figure 2.3.

Unchecked outrage can lead to a vendetta mentality, using the dissertation for personal vindication (e.g., "I'm going to prove just how wrong and unfair YOU are!"). Unbridled zeal can lead to the cheerleading mentality (e.g., "My dissertation will prove just how WONDERFUL my intervention is!"). Adequate and appropriate sloshing can convert outrage or zeal into deliberative curiosity, which in turn provides intellectual and emotional fuel to sustain an inquiry.

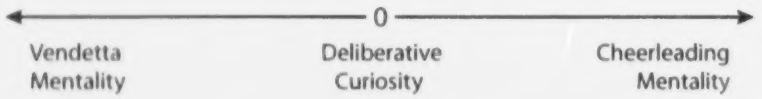

Figure 2.3. Postures Toward the Dissertation

Visualizing One's Puddle

One exercise we use to support "intellectual sloshing" is a metaphoric thinking activity. After sharing the puddles concept with students, we provide large sheets of newsprint and colored markers and ask them to draw their personal dissertation puddle. The first time we tried this activity, we were a little uneasy—would doctoral students, most of whom are well-established practitioners, see this as frivolous or childish? Interestingly, all students have been willing to jump in and try their hand at creating a metaphor. We join in the exercise, usually sketching a puddle related to a writing or inquiry project with which we are currently struggling. Our participation seems to reassure students in two ways. First, our own lack of drawing skills seems to lessen students' anxiety that their pictures won't be artistic enough. Second, it illustrates the point that there are no simple magic formulas for inquiry.

The metaphoric representations promote another level of discourse as students hang their pictures on the wall and then explain the thinking portrayed in the visual images. The metaphors often convey a mix of issues having to do with potential topics, concerns about research methods, and general dissertation anxieties. The discussion itself helps students to make connections with each other and feel more at ease sharing even rudimentary ideas. Again, this exercise can be used as a course-based activity, a private journal entry, or a basis for study group discussion.

Moving From Nebulous Ideas Toward a Study

The transition from early sloshing around in one's puddle to a well-conceptualized research proposal entails considerable work. The iterative nature of dissertation inquiry entails generating successive drafts of documents that convey one's thinking, not just about isolated pieces of the dissertation but also about the interconnections among the facets. To initiate the deliberative and discursive process, our advice is, "Write something. No matter how rough it is. Just write something." Heeding this advice eases one into cycling between private and public deliberation and discourse.

Yet even students who are greatly inclined toward deliberation and discourse often have no clear sense of what they should be thinking or writing about for the dissertation. We suggest development of a *Personal Research Profile* as a starting point.

Evolving a Personal Research Profile

Purpose and Focus of a Personal Research Profile

A Personal Research Profile is a framework for beginning to think and write about oneself as a researcher in relation to the dissertation. Figure 2.4 flags essential pieces of a Profile that are explicated below.

During this first cycle of deliberation, as one struggles to face the dissertation, a Personal Research Profile is a place to record preliminary ideas and to note resources that one intuitively senses may be useful in grappling with the intent and process of the inquiry. In subsequent cycles, one's Profile can continue to evolve into the nucleus of a more formal research proposal.

Before explaining specific pieces of the Profile, we briefly call attention to its *personal* nature. As mentioned in the preface to this book, the researcher is as much a part of the inquiry as the intent of the study and the inquiry process. In fact, *the researcher's thinking* lies at the heart of the inquiry. This surprises students, who may have assimilated ill-conceived dissertation folklore. For example, some students believe that they are not entitled to have or express an opinion until after they have earned their doctorate. Consequently, they see themselves as conduits through which the unexamined thinking of others flows. Another bit of folklore seems to be the stereotype of the dispassionate scientist, disconnected from "real-life" experience in order to look with detachment at reified phenomena. A related misconception is a belief that the essence of inquiry lies in the techniques of data collection rather than in the mind of the researcher. We speculate that these dysfunctional notions contribute to "dissertation block" by diverting attention from the very wellspring of knowledge that feeds the dissertation—that is, students' own professional experiences, personal intellectual concerns, and assumptions about knowledge. Developing a Personal Research Profile is a way for neophyte researchers to begin connecting to their role as inquirer and to their dissertation inquiry.

Explicating the Research Profile—Intent of the Study

Often, the easiest place to begin conceptualizing a dissertation is to talk and write about what one intends to study. Ultimately, in the research proposal, students must be able to craft a statement of intent that addresses the questions, "What is under study?" and "What is the purpose of the inquiry?" Initially, however, these questions are less likely to be helpful than is thinking about potential topics in relation to one's arena of practice and field of study.

Topic refers to the issue, concept, or subject area that might potentially be the focus of the dissertation (e.g., outcomes-based education, school prayer, cooperative learning, financial equity, student retention, service learning, educational inclusion). It is not unusual for students to be interested in several different topics at this stage in their thinking. Rather than prematurely choosing one option over another, this section of the Research Profile can be used to record and weigh the various possibilities.

Intent of the Study

Topic
Arena of practice
Field of study

Inquiry Process

Research tradition
Discipline
  Academic disciplines
  Emerging fields as disciplines
  Education as a discipline
Genre
Method
Research worldview

Figure 2.4. Essential Pieces of a Personal Research Profile

Any topic can potentially be framed in a variety of ways depending upon what one is interested in coming to know/understand. When students first begin to articulate an idea for a study, it is not uncommon for them to be torn between several different issues that are embedded within a general topic area, to describe either an overly grandiose or overly narrow focus on the topic, or to shift their focus each time they describe their research interest. Illustrative of early thinking about dissertation topics is the very first writing that Kitty, an elementary art teacher, did about her study (Exemplar 2.3).

Considering various topics in relation to one's arena of practice allows some ideas to emerge more clearly, while others, of lesser interest, begin to fade.

Arena of practice refers to the context or setting of one's professional practice as well as one's professional role (e.g., public school teacher; 11th-grade English teacher; private school administrator, headmaster; junior administrator; higher education faculty; program evaluator). Both context and role can be considered in terms of past, present, and future arenas of practice.

As discussed in relation to the dissertation puddles (Figure 2.2), past and current arenas of practice can give rise to problematic or troubling issues that might be transformed into a viable dissertation topic. A desire to look backward may be associated with either an unresolved problematic work experience or a particularly enjoyable experience that the student wants to revisit (perhaps to counteract a currently burdensome situation). Anticipated changes in setting or role often help to clarify priorities among potential topics as students come to see the dissertation as laying important groundwork for the next phase of their career.

Writing may also yield unexpected insights. Kristen, for example, was a high school vice principal who was torn between her own desire to counsel students so they could become more engaged learners and the organizational expectation that she would function as the school's disciplinarian. As this role conflict

EXEMPLAR 2.3 Early Writing That Expresses Competing Possibilities for a Dissertation

Currently, I have two topics which I am interested in researching. . . . The first topic deals with a process which I believe is quite valuable to children in the art room. I call this process reflection sheets. These reflection sheets have taken on many forms but are usually used at the end of a project or unit, and their purpose is to get the students to evaluate and reflect upon their work in the hopes that they will recall their strengths and weaknesses when they begin a new project. Although many art teachers provide reflection sheets to their students, I believe mine have a unique form. Also, those art teachers that do provide reflection sheets often only do so at the middle school or high school level. Another advantage I have in using the reflection sheets is that I keep them from year to year, and I keep the artwork throughout the school year. This enables me to see the growth in their drawings as well as their growth in the reflection sheets. Possibly, I feel the need to research this topic since I find that my personal weakness lies in reflecting upon a project which I have completed.

My second topic is the one that I feel most strongly about. It goes something like this. Over the past ten years the role of the art teacher has drastically changed but the perception of the art teacher has not. The only people that I see who value art as an equally important subject are my students. My teaching peers, administrators and parents have verbally stated this view of unimportance or somehow have silently implied that my field is less than important. I find that I frequently express frustration over this lack of respect. However, I am concerned that if I choose this topic it will just sound as if I'm complaining.

Authors' Commentary: Notice Kitty's dual focus. On one hand, there is a fairly narrow focus on a particular instructional technique—the use of reflection sheets with elementary school students. With this focus, Kitty runs the risk of the cheerleader mentality. On the other hand, she has a rather grandiose desire to challenge the educational establishment's perceived devaluing of art. This carries the risk of the vendetta mentality. Such widely divergent possibilities often appear in students' early writings. The issue is moving beyond these vaguely formed notions to a viable dissertation. Embedded in Kitty's writing are two key phrases that suggest avenues for further deliberation. At the end of the first paragraph, Kitty makes a tentative connection between the reflection she expects of her students and her weakness for this type of thinking. This raises the possibility of connecting her ideas to the educational discourses on teacher reflection. At the end of the second paragraph, Kitty expresses misgivings about sounding like a complainer. This provides an entry point for discussing two important issues in qualitative research—stance and voice. It also hints at potential bodies of discourse that might provide insights into the significance of the study—namely, the discourses on aesthetic knowing and rationales for art education.

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became clearer in her writing, so, too, did its possibilities for her dissertation topic. Even when role conflicts are not operating, individuals might be torn between multiple roles or multiple facets of a given role. These can be important clues to potential dissertation topics.

As mentioned earlier, many of the students with whom we work are experienced practitioners; most continue to work full-time as they pursue their doctoral degree. For this group, writing about their arena of practice can help them to step back from the situational details and focus on the conceptual issues embedded in their practice. Other students are enrolled in full-time doctoral study. They may be highly engaged in theoretical discourses as portrayed in formal literature, but see less clearly how to frame a study that speaks to a particular discourse community. Some full-time students work on faculty-directed research projects and are expected to complete some aspect of the larger study for their dissertation. International students, a special subset of full-time students, may be operating under specific mandates from a government or academic institution that is sponsoring their doctoral study.

Regardless of one's specific circumstances, writing about one's arena of practice is often a less stressful way to begin approaching the dissertation. It is also affirming of one's professional competence at a time when being a neophyte researcher may be triggering self-doubts and anxiety. In conjunction with professional background and experience, it is useful to consider one's field of study.

Field of study refers to various subsets of education, such as teaching, instruction and learning, curriculum studies, policy studies, administration, supervision, special education, counseling, evaluation, higher education, school law, or international education. Departments, divisions, and programs within a school of education are generally organized around specific fields of study, and matriculation at a university generally implies a commitment to learning bodies of knowledge associated with one's chosen field. Major fields of study, in turn, often include subgroups with more narrowly focused special interests (e.g., language arts education, science education).

Locating oneself within a particular field of study can lead to preliminary connections between personal/private interests and concerns of larger professional/scholarly communities. Potential topics can be evaluated in terms of two important questions—"So what?" "Who cares?" In other words, who besides the student might find the topic of significance, and how might the student's interest in a topic contribute to some established body of knowledge/discourse?

One dysfunctional bit of dissertation folklore is an assumption that one's committee is the only audience for the study. This may be reinforced by academic structures in which students are conditioned to write term papers that are read only by a course instructor and then filed away. Students who skillfully meet expectations of course instructors may be surprised by the idea that their dissertation is likely to have a broader professional audience. Likewise, they may be disoriented by the dawning realization that the dissertation serves some larger, more public scholarly agenda, not simply an instructor's course syllabus.

Several strategies can be used to flesh out one's field of study in the Research Profile. Listing major players in the field is one starting point. These might be individuals highly respected for their practice, research, teaching, and/or service. Listing the professional associations with which one is affiliated is another good place to start. By visiting the Web site of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), neophyte researchers can find both broad-based divisions

and numerous special interest groups whose members are likely to share common professional and scholarly interests. Identifying the discourse communities that comprise one's field of study can be a starting point for connecting the subject or topic of the inquiry with the inquiry process.

Explicating the Research Profile—Inquiry Process

Shaping a sound qualitative dissertation requires attention to three aspects of the inquiry process—research tradition, research genre, and research method. All of these facets of an inquiry are influenced by one's worldview, most particularly, fundamental assumptions about what constitutes legitimate knowledge.

Research tradition encompasses accepted modes for generating knowledge more broadly within the disciplines and more narrowly within various fields of study. In thinking about this aspect of the Research Profile, it is important to recognize that discipline can be interpreted in three ways:

1. *Academic disciplines.* Academic disciplines refer to branches of instruction or learning that are characterized by formal, theoretical bodies of knowledge. These branches of instruction tend to reflect the ways in which humans strive to comprehend various aspects of the world (e.g., the physical, social, emotional, mental, spiritual). Academic disciplines (e.g., natural sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, philosophy and religion) reflect these major quests for human understanding. Within the various disciplines are long-standing traditions of ways of coming to know the world and human experience within it.[4]
2. *Emerging fields as disciplines.* Emerging fields such as women's studies and black studies have challenged research traditions that privilege ways of knowing grounded in western European assumptions about knowledge and scientific inquiry. The civil rights and women's movements have given rise to new research traditions reflective of the epistemological values of women (Elam & Wiegman, 1995) and people of color.[5]
3. *Education as a discipline.* As the field of education has matured, a number of educational theorists and researchers have argued that it, too, can be viewed as a discipline in its own right (Belth, 1965). Concomitant with this view is the belief that education has its own modes of inquiry that may have traces of traditional disciplined inquiry, but does not claim a disciplinary basis for knowledge generation.

Education is a particular form of human experience, and those striving to understand its essential nature have drawn from various discipline-based ways of knowing to guide their research. For example, those with an interest in the social and cultural aspects of schooling have drawn from sociology and anthropology. Those with an interest in human behavior and learning have drawn from

psychology and biology. Those with an interest in schools as public institutions draw from economics and political sciences.

As mentioned in Think Piece #3, the enlightenment, with its emphasis on empirical observation and rational analysis, profoundly shaped western beliefs about knowledge and ways of knowing. For much of the 20th century, scientific methods of inquiry have dominated research traditions not only in the natural sciences but in the social sciences as well.[6] Educational research, in turn, has been influenced heavily by these scientifically grounded inquiry traditions. Over the past 20 to 30 years, challenges to the primacy of scientific ways of knowing have created more space for educational research that draws from traditions grounded in the disciplines of philosophy; history; rhetoric (Covino, 1994; Roberts & Good, 1993); literary theory (Petrey, 1990); literary criticism (Abrams, 1989; Fahnestock & Secor, 1991; Juhl, 1980); linguistics; and the arts (Barone, 1995; Eisner, 1991, 1993).

It is not uncommon for doctoral students in education to have completed a discipline-based bachelor's and/or master's degree. Indeed, some doctoral programs require formal study in a cognate area. Thus, in developing a Personal Research Profile, it is useful to consider any formal grounding one might have in discipline-based inquiry, rather than contemplating "research tradition" in some vague or abstract way.

In addition, within fields of study, there are likely to be discourse communities defined as much by the type of inquiry they believe to be worthwhile as the type of questions they find compelling to ask. Rarely, then, is there a monolithic answer to the questions of "So what?" and "Who cares?" In all likelihood, some members of a discipline or field of study will be more interested in a student's study, and others will be less interested—not only because of the topic, but also because of the nature of the inquiry.

Research genre refers to particular modes of inquiry that are composed of a constellation of ground rules that a researcher follows in conducting a study. Because educational researchers draw from a variety of research traditions and disciplines, many genres are potentially available (e.g., case study, ethnography, grounded theory, personal narrative, biography, literary criticism, discourse analysis, action research). Because it is possible to spend a professional lifetime developing expertise in a particular genre, imagining that one can master all of these can be counterproductive. During this cycle, it is useful for students to gain a sense of the range of research genres that falls under the qualitative umbrella. Several compendiums offer useful starting points for this exploration (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Jaeger, 1997; Short, 1991).

Although an awareness of various qualitative genres is prudent, concentrating on one or two approaches is probably more feasible and productive. Shaping one's study entails determining which genre might be most relevant. Often, this is determined more by one's instinctive proclivities for coming to know than by the topic or question to be studied.

It is our contention that proficiency in a particular genre is better acquired through an apprenticeship model than an academic course model. Students

come to understand the nuances of the genre as they work out the details of their study. During this first cycle of deliberation, the Research Profile can be used to record initial impressions of various genres and flag possibilities for further study. We return to this issue in Chapter 3.

Research method refers to the procedures or processes used to conduct inquiry. It addresses the proverbial "what, when, how, and who" questions; but it also refers to the "why." One of the most dysfunctional notions about qualitative research is the simplistic assumption that a particular technique or tool constitutes one's research method. For example, one of the most frequent comments we hear from students is, "My study is qualitative. I'm doing interviews." This mistakenly equates a specific data-gathering tool with the broader notion of research method. Smith and Heshusius (1986) suggest that within the empirical worldview, "method" does tend to focus on techniques, especially the collection and treatment of data (e.g., content analysis). Within the interpretivist and critical views, however, method is more usefully conceived of as *logic of justification*.

For us, this means that students go beyond descriptive answers to the "what, when, how, and who" questions. Embedded in their answers are explanations of "why." In short, they provide an explicit rationale for the various procedures/methods/techniques within the "rules" of the genre and within assumptions of the inquiry tradition.

These aspects of the inquiry process are exceptionally difficult to understand and constitute a major part of conceptualizing a qualitative dissertation. We revisit them throughout the book in relation to various cycles. In terms of the Research Profile, it may be useful to jot down general ideas that one has about method. At this stage in one's thinking, the notes might be more about techniques (e.g., interviewing, observation, data analysis) than about method. These early ideas eventually may be incorporated into one's study but within the broader frame of a research genre and inquiry tradition.

Research worldview points to the philosophic orientation that each of us brings to his or her judgments, actions, and ways of knowing. The term *orientation* refers to the specific ways in which an individual looks at the world. On the surface, it includes the notions of point of view, perspective, and a person's outlook in relation to experience and ideas. On a deeper level, it encompasses one's beliefs about what constitutes legitimate knowledge. At issue are several fundamental questions: What "truths" can one claim as a result of one's study? In what "reality" are these truth claims based? Of what "value" are these truth claims? Thus, one's personal orientation influences one's research worldview or research paradigm (Kuhn, 1970). In education, typical labels for research worldview or paradigm are *empirical, interpretive, critical,* and *deconstructivist.* Other terms used in the literature include *positivism, postpositivism, hermeneutics, constructivism, modernism,* and *postmodernism.* (See Think Pieces #3 and #4 for a more extensive examination of these concepts.)

Many authors have tried to explain various research traditions in relation to qualitative research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Sipe & Constable, 1996; Soltis, 1984). Most caution that any set of "defining characteristics" is a tentative approximation at best. Yet students in the earliest phase of exploring qualitative

EXEMPLAR 2.4 Reflective Musings on Research Worldview

I was really excited when I registered for this class [Introduction to Qualitative Research]. I was really looking forward to it, then I made an egregious error—I told a work colleague what I was studying this semester and got lambasted. POW!

You see, Dr. Positivist (name obviously changed) is one of this country's most respected researchers in my field. He has published hundreds of peer-reviewed research articles in some of the most prestigious journals in medicine. He was the editor of a peer-reviewed journal that was "ruined" by qualitative research. He snarled, "There is no such thing as qualitative research. It is an oxymoron. I cannot believe that a journal would publish an article citing interviews with earthquake survivors who all say 'it was terrible' and call that research!" I really like and respect Dr. P, and this really took the wind out of my sails.

Authors' Commentary: Time and time again, we hear similar anecdotes from students. We try to point out that such critics of qualitative research are often members of a different discourse community (or that they may have a valid criticism of shoddy qualitative research). Yet it is difficult for novice researchers to ignore such voices when the speaker is a member of one's field of study, a respected colleague, a mentor, or even a member of one's committee.

Student responses to such remarks vary. At one extreme are those who lapse into an "ain't it awful" state of perpetual whining, feeding the folklore that qualitative dissertations are not acceptable/possible. Others, however, use such comments as a spur to their own thinking and writing.

Repeatedly, students have told us that voices of harsh critics like Dr. P. echo in their ears each time they sit down to write some facet of their study. Some find it debilitating and second-guess the "acceptability" of every word they write. Others use the imagined criticism to clarify issues that they need to think through more carefully. The Research Profile offers a useful workspace for such explorations.

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research have a tendency to read a set of characteristics, to like some more than others, and to then announce, "I've decided I'm this!"—meaning that they are an empiricist or interpretivist or critical theorist. Understanding one's worldview goes deeper than this. It is presumptuous to claim kinship with a particular tradition before immersing oneself in the discourses of that tradition, knowing who comprises the community of scholars, and committing to a disciplined study of the tradition. Exemplar 2.4 is an excerpt drawn from a student's research profile. It illustrates the type of reflective musings that can lead students into a deeper exploration of various research traditions.

In terms of the Personal Research Profile, a couple of suggestions may be helpful. First, it is difficult to grapple with worldview in the abstract. Considering it within the context of one's disciplinary background, field of study, topics of interest, potential genre, and research method helps to bring issues into focus. Dan, for example, taught high school science. He enrolled in our introductory course on qualitative research because he thought he might gather some

qualitative data about his students' reactions to studying science. From the first class to the last, Dan kept asking, "But how can I be certain that the qualitative data will be reliable and valid?" His beliefs about what constitutes "real research" were understandably embedded in the inquiry tradition of the natural sciences. As much as he struggled, he could not reconcile contextually grounded data from his students with broader truth claims of science. Dan could have used the Research Profile to recognize and claim his own empirical epistemological orientation and, perhaps, focus more specifically on more empirically grounded qualitative research genres/methods.

Second, it is rarely productive to think in terms of "choosing" a worldview. Jesse, a newcomer to qualitative research, continually talked about selecting a mode of inquiry that would fit the "problem" to be studied. This circumvented a more introspective posture that might have helped him to understand how the assumptions comprising his own worldview affect his understanding of "the problem" and the methods for researching it.

Getting in touch with one's worldview takes time, and this leads to our third suggestion. Sometimes, we meet highly goal-oriented students who have given little thought to their own epistemological, axiological, and ontological assumptions. Once these concepts are called to their attention, they set about analyzing them so that by the end of a semester, they will "know" their worldview. In our experience, novice researchers come to deeper and deeper realizations about their worldview as they proceed with their dissertations. The Research Profile provides a space in which to begin and continue a process of self-exploration.

Starting a Research Profile

Generally, writing about some components of the Profile is easier than writing about others. The particular starting point and the amount written are far less important than just beginning the process. The Profile document provides a structure for recording new ideas and information; the process of writing the Profile helps to consolidate and clarify thinking. Sharing the Profile with one's advisor provides a focal point for discussion. Once we see student Profiles, for example, we are often able to recommend references related to students' interests. This, in turn, supports the process of tuning into the many discourses that are occurring in the field and of understanding their own stance in relation to the discourses.

Outcomes From the First Cycle of Deliberation

In essence, the Personal Research Profile can evolve into a working draft of a plan for the dissertation. Students who are early in their program of studies begin to see how coursework can help them prepare for the dissertation by tapping into discourses related to potential topics. Students who are nearing the comprehensive examination can begin in-depth reviews of formal literature and discourses

that might underpin their dissertation. Students who are ready to write their proposal have a better sense of what type of inquiry they want to pursue. Within this last group are several subsets of students.

Some students, typically those who have little inclination for discursive deliberation, continue to focus on the acquisition of techniques as the way to "get on and get done with" the dissertation. In an attempt to avoid the messiness and anxiety associated with bringing the embryonic images of a study into clearer relief, these students run the risk of jumping too quickly to an intent for their study and tend to equate the inquiry process with data collection techniques.

Other students continue to slosh in the puddle, often shuffling and reshuffling the pieces of their research profile. Although they generate multiple documents or engage in endless conversations about the dissertation, their thinking remains scattered. It is as if they are working on a 5,000-piece jigsaw puzzle by continually sliding individual pieces around in random fashion rather than trying to fit pieces together. In some instances, all this activity generates an aura of frantic intellectual flailing; in other instances, there is an aura of helpless floundering. The key to helping these students move toward the dissertation in a more deliberative way continues to elude us.

A third group of students, who are particularly troubling to us, can be characterized by the old saying, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." After a one-semester introduction to qualitative research, these students conclude that they know what qualitative research is. The certitude exemplified in the following comment seems at odds with the emphasis we give to the notion of a deliberative mind-set:

> In this course, I learned what qualitative research is, why it is important, what is distinctive about it, what its merits are, the form it can take in regards to methods and how to analyze qualitative data. Qualitative research has six key features . . .

Far more congruent with qualitative inquiry is the deliberative posture suggested in the following comment:

> So what have I learned [during this course]? I have learned that others have paved the way for me; the struggle I face is within me. I have learned that others are willing to share—advice, a shoulder, a critical review; I need to learn to ask for help. I have learned that qualitative research speaks to me; I need to continue to find and strengthen my own voice. I have learned that a peer group is an effective learning tool for me—professionally and personally. . . . I have learned that professors have an interest in my growth and development; acceptance and internalization of that interest is necessary for me to develop more fully and deeply. I have learned that being uncertain or unsure may be uncomfortable but is an "OK" place to be—for others; I need to learn that I, too, can be unsure or uncertain and be free with those feelings. I have learned that others

EXEMPLAR 2.5 Deliberative Posture Toward Learning About Qualitative Research

One of the major things I learned in this course is something I have to relearn time and time again. I couldn't find the originator of this quote but it's one that has affected me profoundly for some time because of its simplicity and power. "There is only one thing that is certain, and that is that nothing is certain."

I learned that qualitative research could be described in a similar fashion. It's one thing and many things. We can be sure that it's not quantitative research, but we wouldn't want to define it that way and that definition would be an informing one (nor would it be absolutely true since some aspects of qualitative and quantitative research overlap). The definition that best explains qualitative research changes as the debate about it continues and the "doers" of the research continue their work. In essence, we can't confine things that are so multifaceted and ever changing . . . to a neat tidy definition. Nor can we define them in reaction to a pre-existing concept in a compare and contrast manner.

I've learned not to anticipate but to explore, and that the rigidity that I abhor but allowed to take over my life and thoughts, plans and behavior was not productive and, more importantly, wasn't necessary. I learned to my surprise that there are a wide variety of types of dissertation work being done. . . .

What I've also learned so well and more so than in any previous course is that although exaggerated somewhat by my personal neurosis, the anxiety I've been experiencing in this process is no different than what virtually every other student in the doctoral program has/is experiencing.

On a different note, I must add that I have learned an entirely new way of looking at processes, one that allows for a different kind of examination, a kind that's not so polarized and constricted. Not so "either/or." Along with this, however, I've learned that applying a more flexible way of analyzing things can be complicated and just outright difficult because it inherently requires new kinds of thinking that may wind up all over the map. I think this kind of thinking requires more care and focus. It's the kind that could easily take researchers (and students) off on tangents from which they have to pull back and focus on the most important pieces before losing sight of the issue at hand. . . .

The course handout, "Thinking About Qualitative Dissertation Research," best illustrates the new way of thinking I'm describing. For example, taking a stiff question like, "What methodology should I use?" and turning it into an informing one like, "What methods allow me to fulfill the intent of my study and address my guiding question?" is nothing less than practical genius thinking. These are questions that reside in two different worlds of thought, one that represents existing and one that represents living.

Authors' Commentary: In contrast to students who claim to know what qualitative research is after one semester, this student exhibits a greater willingness to embrace uncertainty. She has begun to shift from definitive, either/or thinking to a more multifaceted way of understanding. She also exhibits a willingness to be vulnerable and to acknowledge some of her doubts and fears. This opens avenues for discursive deliberation.

> share some of the same fears I face; facing fear is what is important. I have learned that I believe I have a place within the realm of qualitative research; developing self-confidence with this realization must continue.

This student (as well as the student who wrote the comments in Exemplar 2.5) are representative of those who shift enough into a deliberative frame of mind to recognize the need for further investigation into all facets of the profile. They realize that they need far more information to write the dissertation proposal, and they begin to pursue this information more aggressively. When we see this focus and intensity of conceptual grappling, we know that students have begun to face the dissertation and are entering the next cycle of deliberation—moving into the dissertation.

Notes

1. For students who are working on major research projects under the mentorship of a senior investigator, "choosing a topic" may be a more appropriate description for the process. In these circumstances, students may have the opportunity to choose among several potential subsets or spin-offs of the overall project.

2. Students who approach the dissertation from this perspective may be inclined to ground their research in the critical theorist tradition. One student, for example, is doing a critical study of attention deficit disorder with the intent to prompt social and educational change. Those who want to read further about critical theory can begin their exploration with Fay (1987), Kincheloe (1991), and Wexler (1991).

3. We have been privileged over the years to work with a number of students who have done exceptionally fine dissertations grounded in their practice (Blackford, 1997; Ceroni, 1995; Goodwin, 1983; Harris, 1995; Hazi, 1980; Holland, 1983; Knapp-Minick, 1984; Konzal, 1995; Leukhardt, 1983; Llewellyn, 1998; McMahon, 1993; Richards, 1996a; Sanida, 1987; Willis, 1998). In no way do we mean to imply that these are the only good practice-based dissertations that have been done. Indeed, students are encouraged to talk with their advisors about exemplary qualitative dissertations that have been completed at their own university. We mention these dissertations at this juncture in the writing because several of them are used throughout the book to illustrate various aspects of qualitative inquiries.

4. Those who want to explore the notion of academic disciplines might start with Phenix (1964), Roberts and Good (1993), and Vidich and Lyman (1994).

5. For a deeper appreciation of the issue of epistemological bias, see Scheurich and Young (1997).

6. For explanations of how an empirical and quantitative view of knowledge came to dominate Western traditions of inquiry, see Crosby (1997), Heshusius and Ballard (1996), and Shapin (1996).

CHAPTER THREE

Moving Into the Dissertation

A second cycle of deliberation begins as students move from talking vaguely about doing a dissertation to preparing to write a research proposal. By now, students probably know they are more drawn to a qualitative than quantitative approach to inquiry and have some general ideas about the research genre in which they might work. Yet it is impossible for them to imagine everything involved in conceptualizing and conducting a qualitative study. Thus, the intellectual work of this cycle entails immersion in discourses (primarily, but not exclusively, formal bodies of literature) that can inform their thinking about the intent of the study and the inquiry process.

Yet for a variety of reasons, students may be intimidated by the prospect of taking this plunge. For some students, starting to review literature can bring home the reality of doing the dissertation. No longer is this an item on some vaguely conceived to-do list. If digging into the literature symbolizes embarking on the dissertation process, students' ambivalence about doing the dissertation may manifest itself as procrastination on reviewing literature.

Also hampering forward movement into this cycle may be a residue of linear thinking reflected in statements about *the* review of *the* literature. The twofold implication is that there is only one body of literature to be reviewed, and it is reviewed only once. To counteract the dysfunctional notion embedded in the first implication, we stress the importance of immersing oneself in multiple bodies of literature, including those related to potential dissertation topics, the research tradition and genre to which the student is drawn, and techniques that can support a study within a given genre. To counteract the second implication, we stress that ongoing immersion in these multiple discourses is integral to qualitative inquiry.

Thus, the aims of this cycle are to cultivate a sophisticated understanding of relevant discourses and to begin drawing upon these discourses to create a conceptual logic for one's inquiry. Achieving these aims often entails coming to grips with dysfunctional notions about immersion in and writing about literature. The remainder of this chapter is organized into four sections. The first explores issues related to immersion in discourses related to the intent of the study, particularly the topic(s) of interest to the student. The second deals with immersion in discourses related to the inquiry process. The third focuses on immersion in real-

time discourses. The final section addresses the issue of deliberation through writing precursors to the research proposal.

Immersion in Formal Discourses: Intent of the Study

As discussed in Chapter 2, formulating a meaningful intent of the study entails an understanding of topic and audience. Thus, immersion in discourses related to the topic(s) of interest is essential to framing a conceptually sound study. Reading relevant literature connects one's interests to the concerns of broader discourse communities and eventually yields cogent responses to the questions "So what?" and "Who cares?" Through reading and writing, students can begin to clarify their own position in relation to the topic and the discourses. Yet a number of dysfunctional notions about reviewing and using literature create potential pitfalls.

Pitfall—Misinterpretation of "Original Research." Deterring immersion in discourses may be a common bit of folklore—that the topic of one's dissertation must never before have been studied. Repeatedly, we have read preliminary drafts of research proposals that include statements such as the following: "The review of the literature proved that no studies have been done on this topic"; "This topic has not been studied"; "There is nothing in the literature on this topic"; and "Very little has been written on this topic."

For quite some time, we puzzled over this common assertion that the topic had never been researched. Eventually, we came to speculate that it is a misinterpretation of the expectation that the dissertation be an original piece of research. We also speculate that students may avoid immersing themselves in the literature for fear that their topic "has already been done" and that they will be forced to abandon a cherished idea.

To challenge this misperception, we assert, "If nothing has been written on the topic, it probably isn't worth studying." Reviewing literature clarifies where and how one's ideas fit into an evolving discourse about the topic. The notion of *original research* is reframed as "making a meaningful or useful contribution" to the deliberations of a discourse community.

In preparing the research proposal, one must explain not only *what* one intends to study but also *why* the intended study is worth doing. To make a convincing case for the study, it is important to show how it will fit within and contribute to a body of discourse. Ideally, readings throughout one's course of doctoral study will provide this important context. Realistically, we meet far too many students who have little insight into the state of the discourses in their field of study. One strategy for beginning to understand the discourses within a given field is to consult compendia of research related to one's topic. Millman (1981), for example, has edited a handbook of research on teacher evaluation. Macmillan Publishing Company has a line of handbooks on research that runs a gamut of educational topics, including school supervision (Firth & Pajak, 1998); teaching (Wittrock, 1986); curriculum (Jackson, 1992); teacher education (Sikula,

Houston, & Haberman, 1990); English language arts (Flood, Jensen, Lapp, & Squire, 1991); social studies (Shaver, 1991); music (Colwell, 1992); mathematics (Grouws, 1992); sports psychology (Singer, Murphey, & Tennant, 1993); education of young children (Spodek, 1982); science (Gabel, 1994); multicultural education (Banks & McGee Banks, 1995); educational psychology (Berliner & Calfee, 1996); and educational communications and technology (Jonassen, 1995). Reviewing these or similar resources can provide useful insights into the critical issues of concern to a given discourse community.

Pitfall—The Blank Slate. A related dysfunctional assumption is the belief that qualitative researchers deliberately avoid reading any literature related to their topic as a strategy for counteracting personal bias or subjectivity. This notion is dysfunctional in two ways. First, it assumes that objectivity is the *sine qua non* of all research. Second, naïveté generally guarantees shoddy scholarship, not objectivity. Grounding in formal discourses is essential for adequately addressing the "So what?" and "Who cares?" of the study.

We are reminded of a student who wanted to study women mentoring women. She proposed doing what she called a phenomenological study and insisted that reviewing literature on mentoring was inconsistent with a phenomenological approach. At the same time, she had no formal grounding in phenomenology, was reading no literature on phenomenology, and seemed singularly unaware that a body of literature on mentoring existed. Despite cautions that naïveté undermines the researcher's credibility, she was convinced that her study would make a unique contribution by calling attention to an unrecognized phenomenon.

Thinking about colleagues, professional associations, and scholars in a particular field of study can personalize the idea of discourse community and can underscore the dangers of appearing naive to those who are knowledgeable about the subject of an inquiry.

Pitfall—The Laundry List Literature Review. Another dysfunctional notion of reviewing literature was captured by a student who described the process as "genuflecting to the gods." Rather than seeing immersion in the literature as a form of deliberation, novice researchers may use the literature review to show (and show off) their awareness of the "big names" in the field. Although this awareness is necessary, it is not sufficient to craft an informative review of discourses. When the time comes to write a formal review of literature for the research proposal, this mind-set can lead to a laundry list approach, which reads like an annotated bibliography in narrative form. Along the same lines are reviews that take a chronological approach. On one hand, chronologies that provide substantive insight into the evolution of discourses about a particular topic can be exceptionally useful. The danger lies in simplistically patching together snippets of literature written during different time periods without conveying a coherent picture.

Pitfall—The Agree/Disagree Mentality. Another view of reviewing literature was voiced by Micheline, who had resisted for months the idea of shaping a disserta-

EXEMPLAR 3.1 Making Sense of Formal Discourses: An Example Excerpted From a Comprehensive Examination

I began this exercise with the idea of leaving my practitioner's hat behind momentarily in order to try to make sense of the very turbulent dynamics that have taken my educational world by storm over the last few years. My expectation was that as a student researcher I could in some way escape the quick-paced, demanding world of a school practitioner, where vision is often limited to only fleeting glimpses, in order to capture and hold the concept of "educational inclusion" to the light for scrutiny. My intent was to work my way through numerous documents and a voluminous body of literature in search of understandings that could enlighten me and my colleagues as we attempt to meet the complicated, often contradictory, demands of this movement.

In retrospect, I think I had the simplistic impression that I would grow to understand the different "sides" of "the" debate in very much a two-dimensional, "pros and cons" kind of way, and that by so doing I would adopt a solid position of my own. Instead, what I grew to understand was the limitations of a two-sided metaphor.

In my attempts to "shed light" on this intricate educational concept I came to think of it as more like a multifaceted cut stone that, when held before the eye, catches and reflects light differently with each subtle turn. And in a similarly complex arrangement of interconnectedness, the carefully polished planed surface of each individual side is yet also a part of another. So it is by way of my work on this comprehensive examination that I have come to appreciate the many facets of educational inclusion.

What I did not know at the onset was that through the many voices of my fellow participants I would become enabled to "see" and experience the obscured complexities of educational inclusion beyond the face of it. Their discourses paved my way, allowing me to step inside and journey to the heart of the matter.

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tion around the issue of educational inclusion. Having been told repeatedly that her credentials in special and regular education ideally positioned her to study this issue, she finally blurted out, "But I don't want to have to agree with what others are saying. I disagree with their ideas about inclusion." "But why would you have to?" we responded. By the time she completed her comprehensive exam, Micheline was able to move beyond the original dysfunctional notion that her purpose in reviewing the literature was to decide who is right and who is wrong; with whom she agrees and disagrees. Rather, she used the literature to inform her own thinking and thereby to set the conceptual context for her own study. (See Exemplar 3.1 for her own description of this change in thinking.) Yet this shift did not occur easily for Micheline, as evidenced by the following comment:

> As a veteran school practitioner, I have always been somewhat skeptical of the researchers who entered my classrooms appearing to be blind to the complexities of life in schools, seeming to recognize only that which is visible, and seeking only to understand that which could be "scientifically measured." Through the years, I have stood alongside of the many

teachers under my "supervision" and have shared their frustration and rage with the hackneyed words, "research says . . ."

Strategies for Counteracting Pitfalls

Helping students to understand the role of formal discourses in supporting their study is challenging, not only to us but to many faculty advisors with whom we speak. One colleague, William Ayers, who teaches Introduction to Qualitative Research at the University of Illinois at Chicago, advises students to read *The New York Times* book review section to get a sense of how to organize a review along conceptual lines. Resources such as *The International Encyclopedia of Education: Research and Studies* (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1985) as well as the journals published by the American Educational Research Association—*Review of Research in Education* and *Review of Educational Research*—also provide useful examples of conceptual/issue-oriented reviews.

During this cycle of moving into the dissertation, many students are still weighing alternative topics for their study. Thus, one immediate and personal purpose of reviewing literature is to sort through which topic would make a substantive contribution to existing discourse(s). The following questions can help connect personal interests with public concerns:

- Where is the topic being discussed (e.g., formal literature, public media, popular press, policy documents)?
- Who is talking about the topic (e.g., practitioners, researchers, policymakers, general public, special interest groups)?
- When did the topic become a focal point of discourse (e.g., how long has the conversation been going on)?

Having a forum (like a study group) in which to talk about the ideas emerging from the literature lays the groundwork for writing a formal review. Articulating various positions embedded in the discourses can reinforce the importance of mapping them. As Micheline came to realize, the purpose of the review is not to reduce the complexity into a single, overly simplistic vision but to portray the complexity in order to make the discourses accessible to others.

Issues about accessing literature may be another deterrent to immersion in discourses. For example, busy practitioners who are juggling doctoral work with full-time job and family responsibilities may not relish spending evenings and weekends in the library. Some students form groups and schedule a standing night at the library to counteract the loneliness and tedium of this research task. Added benefits of this approach can also include sharing of relevant references and peer coaching on literature search strategies. This latter benefit seems particularly valuable to those who are unfamiliar with and intimidated by computer-based library catalogues and literature indexes.

Similarly, we meet a surprising number of students who rely almost exclusively on card catalogues or ERIC searches for accessing literature. For example,

when we first met Melanie, she had completed a comprehensive examination about women and welfare that contained few references to education. Given that she was pursuing a doctorate in education, we asked about this omission and were told, "There really weren't any studies about that aspect of welfare." Encouraged to check dissertation abstracts, Melanie discovered a number of relevant studies and references that brought into focus the educational significance of her interest in women and welfare.

Tracing bibliographies is another literature-accessing strategy that seems to surprise a number of students. "You mean, I can do that?" is a common response to the suggestion that students find relevant references by checking the bibliographies in articles and books that are particularly meaningful to them. We speculate that a couple of factors may contribute to students' overlooking this obvious strategy. One may be the "academic hoops" mentality, in which compliance with external requirements is the yardstick for completing work. Even at the doctoral level, some students continue to ask, "How long do you want this paper to be?" "How many references are we supposed to use?" The driving force behind this outlook is getting through a perceived hoop, not deliberative curiosity about a given issue.

Another factor may be the myth of the "exhaustive literature review," in which students think they are obligated to search out everything that has ever been written on their topic. Instinctively, they know that this is impossible, but they may be immobilized by the dysfunctional belief that selective reviews are unacceptably subjective.[1] The purpose of immersing oneself in discourses is to develop the wisdom and sensitivity to select literature that informs one's thinking and, in turn, one's study.

So far, we have focused on issues related to immersing oneself in discourses about the intent of the study. We now turn to discourses related to the inquiry process, with the cautionary reminder that actual discourses are rarely as segmented as portrayed in these discussions.

Immersion in Formal Discourses: Inquiry Process

Mind-Set for Listening to Discourses

As portrayed at the end of Chapter 2, students can assume very different postures after their initial exposure to qualitative research. One is an overly confident and, from our perspective, dysfunctional posture that they are now fully prepared to plan and "implement" a qualitative study. The other posture leaves students pondering the questions, "What does it mean to do qualitative research, and how do I prepare for this undertaking?" This more deliberative posture signals a willingness to become immersed in the discourses of qualitative research—in short, to begin an intensive cycle of learning. We share the following anecdote to give an overall sense of the time and energy commitment that this learning entails.

> In the spring of 1997, Maria and two members of our dissertation study group participated in a day of academic celebration sponsored by our

> school of education. During a panel presentation about various types of study groups, a faculty member asked, "I've been trying for a long time now to understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative paradigms. I'd like to know, especially from the students' point of view, how long did it take you to learn the qualitative paradigm?" The study group member who had completed a dissertation in 1993 responded, "I don't think it was so much a matter of learning a paradigm as understanding more clearly the paradigm I've always worked in." To this insightful response, Maria added, "It seems to me that study group members pretty consistently need about a year to a year and a half to understand their inquiry process well enough to explain it in their proposal. That's a year or so from the point at which they seriously start to study qualitative research."

This anecdote also underscores our belief that one does not "choose" a paradigm to learn. Nor does one learn "both paradigms" and then choose one to "use." Rather, we see that students are drawn to a particular way of knowing and that immersion in discourses on inquiry process helps them to understand more clearly and deeply the nature of their own proclivities for knowing.[2]

However, immersion in the discourses of qualitative research can be overwhelming, not only because of the sheer volume of literature, but also because of its complexity and intricacy. Compounding these difficulties is the continually evolving nature of the discourse. As Donmoyer (1996) suggests, we are living in a time of "paradigm proliferation," when conflicting perspectives about qualitative research are being debated at educational conferences and in major journals. Students who operate from a definitional rather than discursive mode of knowing can find the rapid-fire discourses to be especially disconcerting. Illustrative of the dilemma is the following note that Maria wrote in response to such a student:

> I'm a bit troubled by an aspect of your paper—i.e., the continuing search for definitive rules/answers. Let me digress into a personal anecdote to clarify my point of concern. I never learned to ride a bike when I was a child. On several occasions in my adult life I have actually ridden one, but I have no confidence that I can handle a bike on a long ride. In order to manage my anxiety, I want to sit on the bike when it is not moving, have it be perfectly balanced, and then start off at a slow, controlled pace until I gain enough confidence to go faster. As much as I long for the safety of this approach, I know riding an exercycle is the only way I can successfully achieve balance on a unmoving bicycle.
>
> My point is that I believe your quest for certainties about the dissertation process, for finding the authority who can tell you what to do and how to do it, is like my trying to achieve balance without moving. No matter how much time, energy and commitment I devote to riding an exercycle, it will not bring me closer to comfort and confidence on a real bike. The more energy you invest in finding *the right way* to do the dis-

sertation, the farther away it takes you from the kind of thinking that is needed for the dissertation.

What, then, can help newcomers plunge into the discourses of qualitative research and make sense of them? Keeping in mind the different types of references one may encounter in the literature can be a starting point.

Recognizing the Levels of Discourse

The discourses about qualitative research occur on multiple levels, ranging from highly philosophical and theoretical to very practical. In addition, a number of smaller discourse communities under the qualitative umbrella are carrying on very different conversations. Often, some preliminary exploration of a piece is necessary in order to determine just what focus a particular author is taking. To help newcomers pick up the often interwoven threads of conversation, the following discussion highlights several different foci that appear in the discourse.

One difference is the *research tradition* within which an author is writing and the worldview that underpins that tradition. Some authors are aligned more strongly with an empirical tradition, adhering to epistemological assumptions of a positivist or postpositivist worldview. Others, who share the assumptions of hermeneutics (Smith, 1991) or phenomenology (Van Manen, 1977, 1984; Willis & Neville, 1996), write within an interpretive tradition. Those concerned with injustices associated with power relationships and positions of privilege tend to write within a more critical tradition and may draw upon the assumptions of postmodernism[3] and deconstructivism.

Other writers may be more concerned with *philosophical issues*, trying to articulate a rationale for a particular inquiry tradition, or trying to clarify the epistemological underpinnings of several traditions. Within these more philosophically oriented discourses, some authors argue for universal laws of inquiry that hold across all disciplines, research traditions, and genres (Salomon, 1991). Other authors reject these efforts to homogenize the various traditions, arguing that they represent fundamentally irreconcilable differences in worldview.

It is often useful to look at research tradition in conjunction with the *discipline* or *field of study* from which authors are drawing and to which they are contributing. In the past 15 years, interest in qualitative research has mushroomed not only within education but within the social sciences, the arts and humanities, the professions, and even the "hard sciences." Repeatedly, we have seen students who are desperate for information about qualitative research and who naively assume that little has been written on the topic indiscriminately use a hodgepodge of references to legitimate their study. For example, references on case study can be found in the discourses of sociology, anthropology, law, medicine, business, education, and many other fields. Within these fields, case studies might conform to the conventions of empirical, interpretive, or critical traditions. Students who assume that there is a singular case study method run the risk of incorporating logical inconsistencies into their own writing.

At times, it may be useful to draw upon references from disciplines and fields of study outside of education. Brickman (1982) and Flood (1979), for example, write about qualitative research in relation to history; Alasuutari (1995) about researching culture; and Croaty (1996) about phenomenology in nursing research. Sometimes, such references provide important insights into qualitative research, and so they should not be overlooked. Yet care should be taken to link these insights to educational research, and the growing body of literature related directly to qualitative research in education should play a central role in students' deliberations.

Often, the titles of books or articles might lead the unwary novice astray by implying that there is one form of qualitative research. Consider, for example, the following titles: *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992); *Qualitative Methodology* (Van Maanen, 1983); *Varieities of Qualitative Research* (Van Maanen, Dabbs, & Faulkner, 1982); *Qualitative Research in Education: An Introduction to the Major Traditions* (Lancy, 1993); *Qualitative Research in Education: Focus and Methods* (Sherman & Webb, 1988); *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles Within Circles* (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & McCormack Steinmetz, 1991); *Research and the Teacher: A Qualitative Introduction to School-Based Research* (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989); and *Doing Qualitative Research* (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). All of these references might potentially be of value for particular types of qualitative dissertations. But students who erroneously assume that any of these references described *the* approach to a qualitative dissertation can run into difficulties. Quite a different perspective might be gained if students first happened upon a different set of titles, such as *Inquiry and Reflection: Framing Narrative Practice in Education* (Brunner, 1994); *Qualitative Voices in Educational Research* (Schratz, 1993); *Researching Education Policy: Ethical and Methodological Issues* (Halpin & Troyna, 1994); *On Writing Qualitative Research: Living by Words* (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997); *Writing the Qualitative Dissertation: Understanding by Doing* (Meloy, 1994); and *Pursuing a Qualitative/Critical Research Thesis in Education* (Smyth, Hattam, & Shacklock, 1997).

Another difference found in discourses on qualitative research is the *nature* of *issues* being addressed. Some authors (e.g., Creswell, 1994; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Jackson, 1987; Marshall & Rossman, 1995) tend to take a more "how-to" approach toward research design. Others (e.g., Heshusius, 1994; Oldfeather & West, 1994) focus on the mind-set that is conducive to conducting qualitative research.

Another subtlety to watch for is the *research genre* about which various authors are writing. As mentioned in Chapter 2, several books (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Jaeger, 1997; Short, 1991) provide helpful orientations to the range of genres available to qualitative researchers. Once one or two potentially useful genres have been identified, more in-depth reading can be done in books devoted exclusively to a particular mode of inquiry. It is impossible to do justice to the variety and number of such genre-focused books now being published. The following references are mentioned only as illustrations of several research genres that educational practitioners often find useful. Those interested in case study, for example, might consult texts such as Hamel (1993), Merriam (1997), Stake

(1995), and Yin (1993, 1994). For exploring the genre of action research, texts of potential use might include Greenwood and Levin (1998), Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), McTaggart (1997), Stringer (1996), or Whyte (1991). Those interested in ethnography have a wealth of resources available to them (e.g., Atkinson, 1990; Denzin, 1996; Erickson & Stull, 1997; Fetterman, 1998; Stewart, 1998; Van Maanen, 1995; Woods, 1996). Particularly useful for those working in the gray zone between the empirical and interpretive traditions is grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Piantanida, 1982; Stern, 1980; and Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Other options include heuristic research (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1981, 1990); biography (Kridel, 1998); and mythopoetic (Holland & Garman, 1992) and arts-based educational research (Barone, 1995; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Finley & Knowles, 1995).

Many authors focus on specific research procedures, methods, or techniques. These are, in fact, too numerous to cite in any detail. But to give a flavor of references available, we mention examples related to procedural issues that seem to be of great concern to neophyte researchers. Numerous books on interviewing in qualitative research are available (e.g., Douglas, 1985; McCracken, 1988; Mishler, 1986; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 1991). Poland (1995) concentrates on the rigorous transcription of qualitative data. Data analysis and text interpretation are the focus of Coffey and Atkinson (1996), Maranhao (1990), Miles and Huberman (1984), and Nielsen (1995). With the emergence of narrative modes of inquiry (Barone, 1992; Bruner, 1985; Casey, 1995-1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1991; Josselson & Lieblich, 1993; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997; Mitchell, 1981; Reason & Hawkins, 1988; Robinson & Hawpe, 1986; Sandelowski, 1991), there has been a growing body of discourse on writing as a way of knowing (Adams, 1984; Richardson, 1994) and voice (Hargreaves, 1996; Knoeller, 1998; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997).

The preceding discussion highlights just some of the nuances that complicate and enrich the discourses on qualitative research. Developing a capacity to attend carefully to the intricacies of these discourses is part of the intellectual work of this second cycle of deliberation. Over the years, as we have observed students struggle to develop this capacity, several approaches of varying efficacy have come into focus.

Approaches for Grappling With Discourses

We have touched repeatedly on one extremely dysfunctional approach, that of comparing and contrasting qualitative research with quantitative research. Several dangers lurk in this approach. Often, the comparisons are based on ill-formed stereotypes about quantitative research. Beyond that, the unfortunate designation of "quantitative" versus "qualitative" misleads students into differentiations based solely on the use of numeric or linguistic data. When this distinction does not hold up, students may espouse a "mixed-method" study that combines both qualitative and quantitative data. Unfortunately, in lobbying for mixed method, students all too frequently overlook more fundamental epistemological issues, such as the "rules" for making interpretations and drawing conclusions from either type of data.[4]

Another danger of defining qualitative in relation to quantitative research arises if students assume that qualitative is considered a marginal alternative to "real" research. This can result in defensive attempts to rationalize the legitimacy of a qualitative study, rather than a straightforward explanation of what the student intends to do. (See Exemplar 3.2 and Think Piece #3.)

Taking an overly broad approach to understanding the discourses is another potentially dysfunctional approach. It might, for example, be possible to undertake a fairly extensive study of the various traditions under the qualitative umbrella (empirical, interpretive, critical, and deconstructivist) if students are early in their doctoral program and are able to devote a significant number of credit hours to this endeavor. This may, in fact, be useful for students who are planning to pursue careers as either qualitative researchers or university faculty who want to guide qualitative dissertations. However, for students who are and plan to remain practitioners, such a broad-brush approach to understanding qualitative inquiry is probably not feasible, especially if they are nearing the end of their doctoral program or have actually entered the dissertation process. Rather, we typically see students gravitate to one tradition or another after their initial explorations. Following their instincts leads students to a deeper understanding of their own proclivities for knowing and a greater awareness of the types of questions they find compelling.

Even less productive than the overly broad approach is a narrow fixation on a specific procedural question, which, more often than not, stems from a dysfunctional stereotype of qualitative research. For as long as we can remember, the most common fixation has been on interviewing, typically expressed in words to the effect, "My study is qualitative. I'm going to do interviews." With this point of departure, students press for answers to questions such as the following: How many people should I interview? How should I word the questions? Won't the interviews be really subjective? What should I do if people don't want to be interviewed? Is it better to ask specific or general questions? and How do I analyze interview data? Such questions mistakenly assume that "doing interviews" is the defining characteristic of qualitative research, and that there is one right way to gather and analyze interview data. Noticeably missing is an awareness of the more fundamental questions: What makes interviews appropriate for or necessary to this study? What is the contribution of interviews to the overall purpose of the study?

In the past few years, another overly narrow and simplistic focus has begun to rival the fixation on interviewing. Namely, more and more students explain their interest in qualitative research based on a desire to give voice to some marginalized group. Generally, this type of qualitative study is vaguely conceived of as interviewing several people in a target group (e.g., students, teachers, parents, principals) and writing up their stories. Typically, these well-intentioned students have given little thought to the epistemological complexities of such an inquiry.

Let us be clear that we are neither dismissing the importance of interviews nor disparaging concern for disenfranchised populations. Rather, we are suggesting that narrow and simplistic conceptions constrict the capacity to listen productively to the discourses of qualitative research. Exemplar 3.2 illustrates

EXEMPLAR 3.2 A Defensive Approach to Justifying a Qualitative Study

Because of the dominance of the technical, rational model in education, why would someone undertake an autobiographical and narrative inquiry with preservice teachers on the topic of dreams and goals? What value would a longitudinal study of this sort serve?

Although statistics are useful to portray a succinct picture on a given issue, they are unable to present the participants' values and beliefs. In this study, the "insider's point of view" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 52) during their preservice experience was given primary consideration through the use of autobiographical inquiry, narrative inquiry, action research, and case study.

To complement quantitative research, a study of this sort provided "a place for teachers to tell and retell their stories of teaching."

Authors' Commentary: This excerpt from a dissertation illustrates several common pitfalls that can occur when students try to justify the legitimacy of their study with insufficient understanding of their inquiry process. The questions in the opening paragraph create a defensive tone that permeates the entire passage. If the student has done a thorough job of mapping the discourses about preservice teacher education, the value of the study should already have been made in terms of contribution to the discourses, not in opposition to the rational, technical approach. Furthermore, within almost any field of education, there are now robust discourses that are not dominated by rational, technical models; certainly, this is true in teacher education. Using the rational, technical discourses as a point of departure suggests that the author is not familiar with these other discourse communities in her field of study.

In the second paragraph, the student falls into the trap of justifying a qualitative approach in terms of the limitations of statistics. This is tantamount to Joe Montana or Dan Marino explaining their interest in football in terms of how baseball does not fit their interest and skills.

The phrase in Paragraph 3, "to complement quantitative research," suggests that qualitative research is second best in the student's mind. The depth of discourses on qualitative research has established the legitimacy of this inquiry tradition as separate, but equal, to the quantitative tradition. Although some educational scholars may not value the qualitative tradition, one makes the contribution to the scholarly communities that do value it. Again, the implication is that the student is unaware of these discourse communities that would be supportive of and interested in her work. It is more likely, however, that she is aware of the communities but does not understand their significance in relation to framing her study.

Another red flag is raised by the phrase, "the use of autobiographical inquiry, narrative inquiry, action research, and case study," at the end of the second paragraph. Each of these is a distinct genre, and using them in this conglomeration would be the equivalent of saying, "I want to be recruited by the Pittsburgh Steelers so that I can play football, baseball, basketball, and soccer." We've dubbed this the "kitchen sink syndrome," in which the student tries to cover all bases by including everything but the kitchen sink in the research methods.

continued

Finally, the student indicates that she is going to create a place for teachers to tell their stories. Framing the study as autobiographical implies that the author is telling her own story. Drawing upon teachers' stories to write her dissertation suggests that she might be doing a narrative study, but this is different from creating a place where teachers tell their own stories (e.g., editing a book in which the teachers author their own stories).

The overall impression conveyed in this very brief passage is that of a naive student who has not come to grips with the research tradition or genre within which she is working.

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several ways in which inadequate understanding of one's mode of inquiry can surface in one's writing.

As students make the transition from an introductory exploration of qualitative research to immersion in the discourses, the idea of finding one book to explain the method for doing this type of inquiry has receded. Yet a variation of this approach occurs when students look for a dissertation that can serve as a model for their study. This search can be frustrating not only because of variations in qualitative methods, but also because of a lack of explicit clues that shed light on the reasons for such variations. On one hand, this frustration can signal a lingering belief in *the* qualitative method. On the other hand, it can be a realistic response to vaguely conceptualized qualitative dissertations. Figure 3.1 highlights information that students might note as they read dissertations (and other qualitative research documents).

Before turning to the notion of real-time discourses, we want to reemphasize a couple of points about immersion in formal discourses. The concept of *discourse communities* is one key to making sense of the complexities and intricacies of the literature on qualitative research. The ability to map different positions held within and among discourse communities is essential to understanding what is "out there"; to move from naïveté to wisdom about the intent of one's study and modes of inquiry. However, this externally focused understanding is only a starting point. Ultimately, the focus must be inward, resonating with the discourses as a way of preparing oneself for the role of scholarly inquirer. This interplay between an external and internal focus is nicely illustrated by a reflective piece written by Marge, who we introduced in Chapter 1 and who pursued her interest in feminism throughout her doctoral coursework (Exemplar 3.3).

Immersion in Real-Time Discourses

We use the concept of *real-time discourses* to designate several other important sources of information that can inform students' thinking about their dissertation work. One such source that is crucial for educational practitioners is connection with (if not immersion in) discourses that occur at professional and re-

Title of study/article:

Author:

Discipline/field of the dissertation:

Which format was used for the dissertation, and how does the format support the conceptual structure of the study?

What is the intent of the study?

What are the Guiding Questions?

From which discourses does the review of literature draw; how is the review of literature organized?

Who is the audience?

To which discourses does the dissertation contribute?

Which research genre guides the inquiry?

Which type(s) and source(s) of data were used in the study?

Which data-gathering procedures were used?

Which other aspects of the study/article caught your attention or raised questions for you?

Figure 3.1. Information to Note When Exploring Qualitative Dissertations

search conferences.[5] Although time and funding constraints often limit opportunities for travel to professional meetings, the formal proceedings and informal networking associated with these gatherings can safeguard against provincial thinking. Fortunately, the Internet creates possibilities for ongoing dialogue among scholars and practitioners around the world. One student, for example, became a regular "lurker" in QUALERS, a discourse community of qualitative researchers located in cyberspace. Others connect more actively by posting questions to lists. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Web site of the American Educational Research Association provides connections to divisions and special interest groups that cover the gamut of educational fields and subfields.

Sometimes, students are reluctant to enter into these discourses for fear that someone will "steal" their unique idea. In reality, becoming an active (if junior) member of a discourse community can not only help to clarify an interested audience for one's study, it can also establish one's identity (and, it is hoped, reputation) as a young scholar in a particular field.

Another form of real-time discourse can help students settle into a context for their study and hone techniques or procedures. For example, when students are planning to conduct interviews, create conversations, gather stories, or observe at a particular site, engaging in these activities as early as possible is useful. Sometimes, students are surprised at this idea, fearing that collecting data before their proposal has been approved will somehow contaminate their study. In actuality, these early encounters can provide students with a number of valuable

EXEMPLAR 3.3 Coming to Grips With the Internal Meaning of Formal Discourses

When I was in the Henny Penny stage of organizing this comprehensive exam question—you know, the frantic time of darting about screaming, "the sky is falling, the sky is falling"—I jumped from article to article in a frenetic clip, jotted down notes and fragments of ideas, wrote commands on the cover of texts that said "Get this." I was in the evacuation mode of grabbing things to possess them. I was a mess. I made Henny Penny look catatonic. Then, I'd talk to myself. "Slow down," I'd say. "Panicking will get you nowhere." Ok. Ok, I resolved. Begin at the beginning. Read a research proposal or a college text about feminist theory that will serve as a review for you; this will get you focused and maybe uncover a way to go that will be helpful. Satisfied that I at least had not yet been struck by catastrophe, I had found a place where I felt safe. Ok, I know this, I'd say as I read. Yes, I understand that. Then, I would read the names of scholars seminal to theory whom I hadn't read, or I'd read bibliographies, and the panic happened all over again. How could I have formed my topic last summer and not have read so and so? How could this one's work be so significant, and I hadn't even heard of her? "What a thrice triple ass am I," I'd say to myself as Caliban did; you don't know this, or you didn't read that. "Abusing myself to myself," I'd start darting about again, practically stopping people on the street to complain that I'd be on Medicare before I even wrote my comp, let alone the dissertation.

Then it hit me. Not the sky, but maybe a piece of it. I had tried to sort through the differing strands of feminism—the liberals, the radicals, the Marxists, the postmoderns, the socialist, the psychological—and make sense of them. I found strands of commonality in feminist pedagogy and discovered who thought what about what—or at least I was beginning to understand. I thought knowledge, gender, subjectivity, authority, the personal and emancipatory goals were all significant. But everything seemed to overlap. Some scholars had moved from Marxist feminism to postmodern feminism. Some authors declared themselves occupants of a few places—like critical theorist and educationalist—or were in no place or multiple places. Everything seemed to be moving and shifting (except me)—even the focus of major disciplines in feminism. I was quite overwhelmed in trying to understand it all. In fact, there was no way that I could understand it all.

Then, while driving on the turnpike, I started thinking once again about teaching and feminism, and I was trying to once again sort through what the scholars said, through what I knew and what I felt I needed to know—talk about too much world and too little time. I just couldn't seem to narrow my focus to make all of this manageable. But finally I asked myself what thing or things really bothered me about this teaching change of mine. I thought about the basketball story I had written and the story about W & J. I thought about my English classes and what I struggled with in the past two years. Authority. Authority and problems with what it means, how it is construed, sharing it, losing it, or not claiming it—these issues seemed to be the seat of real trouble for me. Why not think this thing, the comp, through myself? This might be a way "in," a way to come to grips with things that had eluded me. And it certainly seemed not only workable but feminist in approach. Perhaps this will work, I thought, so I began anew.

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procedural insights. For example, romanticized notions of "telling stories" may fade with the realization that people often tell rather mundane or boring stories about their lives. Even more sobering may be a realization that the student him- or herself has little innate talent for storytelling. Other insights might relate to the following:

- Their own style of interviewing and/or observing
- The pros and cons of various approaches to interviewing and/or observation
- The types of questions or prompts that elicit useful information
- Procedural issues that go beyond the interview or observation, such as organizing and keeping track of interview/observational records
- Issues of interpretation, such as what purpose the data serve
- Issues of portrayal, such as how to convey the meaning embedded in the data

Researchers working within an empirical tradition might frame these early efforts as a pilot study. Although this can be useful and may, in some instances, be necessary to us, the concept of *pilot test* implies more formality and rigidity than may be appropriate, especially in an interpretive or critical inquiry.

The point is that such real-time discourses can help students connect formal discourses with their ideas for the dissertation. In the process, issues related to context and procedures can come into clearer focus. So, too, can skills associated with particular modes of inquiry.

Writing Precursors to the Research Proposal

Although completing a coherent dissertation proposal or research proposal is beyond the students' reach at the outset of this cycle, writing even rudimentary drafts supports deliberation and moves them closer to the dissertation. "Drafts of what?" seems to be a primary concern. Several options are available, depending on the students' phase of doctoral work. For example, if students are still completing coursework, the Personal Research Profile described in Chapter 2 can serve as a useful format. Information from various discourses can be incorporated into the Profile, gradually bringing students to an understanding of where they "plant their feet" for their inquiry (e.g., research tradition, research genre, disciplinary background, field of study, arena/context of practice).

If students are finished with their coursework, immersion in discourses can be excellent preparation for a comprehensive examination. Because comprehensive exam requirements may differ among universities and even among programs within the same university, students who use comps to focus their reviews of literature should check on these requirements. Regardless of institutional

specifics, however, it can be helpful for students to see themselves not as objects of examination, but as agents who are carefully and comprehensively examining select bodies of literature related to their dissertation interests. Through this process, they demonstrate a capacity to deal analytically with a large and complex body of literature.

In some places, students are able to fulfill the comprehensive exam requirement by submitting one or two shorter "term" papers. In our experience, these students may flounder when it comes time to write their dissertation proposal. Being less attuned to formal discourses, they often have difficulty articulating the potential significance of their study. Even more troubling is an apparent disregard that some students have for formal literature and a tendency to rely on relatively few references to support their thinking. Thus, we encourage students to seek opportunities where they can immerse themselves in complex bodies of literature, and to practice the skills of mapping discourses.

Students who have completed all qualifying requirements and are preparing to conceptualize a research proposal might begin writing a short paper describing their ideas for the dissertation. Aiming toward a 3- to 5-page paper is often less intimidating than tackling the research proposal and can alleviate initial writer's block. One way to catalyze writing a short paper is to start with a university's human subjects guidelines. Generally, students are required to ensure ethical treatment of study participants by submitting their research plan to an institutional review committee. The guidelines outline specific information to be submitted (e.g., the purpose of the study, the research questions, research procedures), which provides a focused starting point for writing.

Regardless of what type of document the student chooses to begin writing, the point is, "just do it." Groping for words to express ideas fosters greater sensitivity to and command of research language. In the process, taken-for-granted assumptions about research and the dissertation often surface, making them accessible for more deliberate examination. By relating information from the formal discourses to specific aspects of their own study, students continue to shape the contours of their inquiry, moving closer to the dissertation and preparing to write the research proposal.

Vulnerability of Discursive Deliberation

In closing this discussion, we raise a final point for consideration. Repeatedly, we are reminded of the vulnerability of students during this cycle and the fragility of the discursive deliberation between student and advisor. On one hand, these deliberations must be intellectually tough, challenging ill-formed ideas or poorly conceived studies. On the other hand, excessive or heavy-handed feedback can undermine students' confidence, causing them to abandon potentially good studies, or worse, the entire dissertation venture. Maintaining a productive deliberation requires some risk taking and a great deal of trust on the part of both student and advisor. We are still haunted by the possibility that we missed some important cue from students in the following situations:

One student came to us, intrigued by the overrepresentation of adopted children in special education. Her review of literature indicated that unlike many other professions (e.g., law, medicine, social work, psychology, public welfare), special education had neither a robust nor long-standing discourse on adoption. She had begun to build a case for generating such a discourse but vacillated between looking at infant or older child adoptees. At one point, when she was leaning toward infant adoptees, she formulated an intent for her study that rested upon flawed assumptions. Calling this to her attention seemed to precipitate a conceptual paralysis that persisted until personal commitments caused her to relocate to another area of the country. As far as we know, she never completed a dissertation.

Kristen (whose conflict between the educational and disciplinary demands of her vice principal role was mentioned in Chapter 2) experienced a similar paralysis when we suggested that she might craft a study around this very dilemma. After sitting silently through a number of study group meetings, she eventually dropped out of the group and avoided individual contact with her advisor.

Both of these students were extremely bright, capable practitioners. Both had potentially meaningful and do-able studies. We still wonder if something we said or did not say—some missed cue—short-circuited the process of discursive deliberation.

Our experience with Paula, the elementary art teacher in Chapter 1 who found a qualitative dissertation more engrossing than watching television, brought home once again the conceptual intricacies of this cycle. For approximately 6 months, Paula seemed to talk in circles about her dissertation topic. One minute, she was cheerleading for an approach to art and education used with preschool children in the Reggio Emilia district of Italy. The next, she would talk nostalgically about her first teaching experience with blind children, an experience she apparently wanted to recapture through her dissertation. Because neither of these studies seemed feasible, she also considered, with some prodding from us, a study of her pedagogy in her current situation, a laboratory school. Each conversation seemed to be a rehash of the same ideas, the only difference being the bluntness with which we pointed out the conceptual flaws in her study ideas and the directness with which she resisted our suggestions. Despite the mounting frustration among all three of us, Paula, much to her credit, did not disengage from this deliberative struggle. She continued to read and to draft short papers. Exemplar 3.4 contains excerpts from three key drafts that illustrate the evolution of her thinking. As our Authors' Commentary indicates, the final draft holds within it the clue to a viable study, a clue that we came dangerously close to missing.

Discursive deliberations—the process of thinking aloud with others—deserves the utmost respect and care. This does not mean automatic acceptance of ideas. As one study group member said, "I shared my 3-page draft with several colleagues. They all thought my study sounded good. That was nice. But it didn't

EXEMPLAR 3.4 Trying Out Potential Ideas for a Study

	March Draft	*April Draft*	*August Draft*
Working title	Entering the child's world: A narrative study of young children's art making in an integrated art setting. Entering the child's world: A narrative study of an art teacher's adaptation of the Reggio Emilia approach. Toward a new paradigm: Finding the balance between child-centered and subject-centered approaches to teaching art.	Entering the child's world: A narrative study of studio art as pedagogy in early childhood.	
Intent of study	To study my classroom to inform my pedagogy. (To find the most insightful, meaningful ways to teach art to young children.)	To delineate (portray) studio art as pedagogy in early childhood. To examine the pedagogy of studio art in early childhood.	To do a narrative study of my pedagogy. I would explore the use of narrative (as personal experience) in the teaching of art to children K–8 at a Laboratory School.
Context	I hope to study one of my early childhood, multiage (K–1–2) art classes throughout the year. This would include once-a-week, 1-hour art classes; short- and long-term projects integrated with their homeroom teacher; small groups during and after school. This is a class where I have been collaborating with the classroom teacher in adapting the Reggio approach.	My K–3 students at the laboratory school. If needed, I could also include the 3- to 5-year-olds at the museum.	

Importance of the study

In the '50s and '60s, art education was dominated by a child-centered approach to the teaching of art which focused on the child, creativity and self-expression. During the '60s, with the influence of Sputnik and a return to basics, the pendulum began to swing to a more subject-centered approach to teaching art. The subject-centered approach, commonly known as discipline-based art education, focused on teaching the art contents, or disciplines—studio production, aesthetics, art criticism, and art history. The leading researchers in these areas were theorists primarily working with adults. They influenced curriculum development, leaving out the importance of understanding child development and how young children think and learn. Currently, there is beginning to be a call for a balance between subject-centered and child-centered approaches.

Note: I am not sure if child-centered is the word that I am looking for. I would certainly have to define it—but it also is a "loaded" word with a lot of negative connotation in art education, so maybe another word or phrase would be better. It also may be too narrow for what I want to cover. Children in the early childhood years present developmental and cognitive challenges vastly different from those of older children. How do we design art education programs for young children that have characteristics and patterns uniquely their own?

In the '50s and '60s, a child-centered approach to art, emphasizing creativity and self-expression, dominated the field of art education. Over the last 20 years the emphasis has changed to a focus on the disciplines, or contents, of art education—studio production, aesthetics, art history, and art criticism. Each of these disciplines has pedagogical practices of its own. The theorists writing about these disciplines are often writing for adults or older children and have overlooked the importance of understanding the young child—how he/she thinks, learns, etc.—when designing curriculum. In my field there is a need to find a more child-centered approach to teaching the young child.

Rationale: Part of the "so what" of this study is that art teachers who are being trained with content-based curriculum models, often are not prepared to understand what is really meaningful to children in the art making process. They are taught to plan curriculum even before they meet the children and know their interests. Curriculum is often imposed upon the children instead of emerging from the children's developmental and personal interests and experiences. Listening to children, watching their play, hearing their stories, observing their art making, and taking note of their personal narrative themes in their art and play can assist the art teacher in planning curriculum and designing art experiences that are meaningful for the children.

continued

EXEMPLAR 3.4 **Continued**

March Draft	*April Draft*	*August Draft*
My Background Interest	Seventeen years ago, I taught art to blind children. Many of my art classes were with children 3-8 years old. During those years, my pedagogy began to be defined. It was important to listen carefully to the children and to understand the world from their point of view. After teaching at this school for 11 years, I left to take a job at a private school, teaching art to children, K–8. I found myself frustrated that I could not do many of the things I had done with the blind students. My class size was 24 instead of 4. I had no assistant. . . . The children were disruptive and much of my initial time was spent on classroom management. After I had been teaching there for 5 years, I began to hear about the Reggio Emilia preschools. As I studied their philosophy and pedagogy, I discovered that many of my beliefs were consistent with theirs. I was inspired to understand and incorporate many of their principles into my own pedagogy.	I've always been interested in the narrative quality of children's artwork. I've been interested in the stories that they tell and in the stories that they act out in their play. It seems that whatever art lessons I've done with children, I have always ended up tapping into their own personal narratives. Most often these lessons were based on the themes that I observed in their art making, storytelling, and play. To me this has been the key to entering their worlds and finding out what was most meaningful to them.

Authors' Commentary: Notice the overlap of ideas among the three drafts. A superficial reading could give the impression that Paula is merely reshuffling the same information, and to a certain extent, this is the case. Beyond that, however, each draft not only includes bits of new information, but also shows different relationships among recurring concepts—personal narrative, pedagogy, entering the child's world, and child-centered versus subject-centered art education. Personal narrative, for example, appears as a mode of inquiry in all three drafts, but the subject of the narrative shifts as different possibilities are laid out—young children's art making; an art teacher's adaptation of a particular art approach; child-centered and subject-centered approaches; studio art as pedagogy. Early on, Paula worried a great deal about where she could/should do her study and with what age group, as though these details were decisive elements of her study. This concern with context is reflected in the first two drafts, but it recedes in the third. Attention to context also appears in the background section, but an important shift occurs between the second and third drafts. In April, Paula gives a chronological description that emphasizes the situational aspects of her work history. The August draft focuses on a pedagogical concept, "the narrative quality of children's artwork." This phrase probably holds the conceptual key to Paula's study, a key that was foreshadowed in the second sentence of the intent for the study when Paula says, "I would explore the use of narrative in teaching." Previously, Paula had been talking and writing about the use of narrative as a mode of inquiry. In the August draft, however, there is a glimmer of narrative as a core pedagogical modality. Suddenly, the phrase "entering the child's world" no longer seems like an attempt to have a catchy title but, rather, has pedagogical significance. Paula's continual recounting of her experience in teaching blind children no longer has the feel of romanticized nostalgia; instead, it represents the experiential foundation of her pedagogical philosophy. Her enthusiasm for Reggio Emilia seems less like cheerleading and more like a shorthand phrase for describing the type of pedagogy/curriculum she strives to enact. The decreased concern with context becomes understandable, because listening with an "enlightened ear" to her students' stories about their artwork is not restricted to one classroom or age group.

The August draft represents a pivotal point for Paula in the second cycle of deliberation. Now that the role of narrative in her own pedagogy has come more clearly into focus, Paula can intensify her immersion in the discourses related to narrative in education, art education, and educational research. She can begin to build a rationale for her study that draws more appropriately from these discourses. She can also begin to think more specifically about the procedures for her study, considering how she will capture the narrative aspects of her teaching.

help me." When the goal is to bring into clearer focus the shape of the study, discursive deliberations can be simultaneously challenging and supportive.

Notes

1. Ongoing concern about being "subjective" can indicate a student's underlying inclination toward an empirical study. It is definitely an indicator that more deliberation is needed on the epistemological assumptions of the more interpretive or critical traditions of qualitative inquiry.

2. Interestingly, a number of students have asked if it is possible to change one's paradigm. A book edited by Heshusius and Ballard (1996) offers accounts by noted researchers and evaluators of their transition from positivist to more interpretivist worldviews.

3. Those who are interested in exploring the notion of postmodernism may find books by Anderson (1990) and Scheurich (1997) to be a useful starting point.

4. Although references to mixed method can be found in the qualitative research literature, novice researchers are cautioned about using this concept in an overly simplistic way. Those who want to mix some qualitative data into a fundamentally empirical study would be wise to consider the dangers of treating such data as "human filler" (Richardson, 1994).

5. Students who strongly identify with their practitioner role are encouraged to join not only relevant professional associations but also research associations. Relying primarily on newsletters or trade journals for information related to the profession often does not provide insights into the research interests of concern to the profession. Each year, the American Educational Research Association publishes descriptions of its divisions and special interest groups. Reviewing this list can help students to clarify their field of study and connect with relevant discourse communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Crafting the Dissertation Proposal: Part 1

A friend of ours recounts an anecdote from his first intercontinental trip. At one point in the otherwise smooth flight, passengers experienced a slight bump, followed by the pilot's announcement, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have just crossed the international date line." The demarcation between the second and third cycles of deliberation is often as invisible as slipping from one time zone to the next. When students engage in writing and rewriting descriptions of ideas for their study, these precursors to the research proposal gradually evolve into a working draft of the formal document. As illustrated by Paula's writing about art education (Exemplar 3.4), what seemed to be false starts brought her closer to a core concept of narrative pedagogy that could, in turn, provide greater clarity and intensity to her deliberations. It is this sharpening of focus, this explicit understanding of where one's study is heading, that initiates the intellectual task of the third cycle: carefully crafting a conceptually sound research proposal.

The crafting process entails drawing upon one's personal context and relevant discourses to forge the structural relationships between the intent of the study and the inquiry process. Deliberations focus on ensuring congruence among the following facets of the study:[1]

- The title of the study
- Contextual background/rationale
- Intent of the study
- Research tradition and research genre
- Guiding research questions
- Research procedures
- Researcher's voice and stance
- Anticipated portrayal
- Anticipated structure of the dissertation document

The "conceptual glue" that binds all facets of the study into a coherent whole is the *logic of justification*. Novice researchers, especially those who equate research method with data collection techniques, are perplexed by the concept of logic of justification. Therefore, we begin with a consideration of this key concept in relation to the notion of research genre and research tradition. This chapter concentrates on the role of these concepts in shaping both the overview and the final dissertation. Chapter 5 then looks more specifically at issues related to each facet of the study.

Logic of Justification, Research Genre, and Research Tradition

To give a felt sense of the relation among logic of justification, research genre, and research tradition, we start with an analogy to the world of team sports, particularly those falling under the general umbrella of "ball games." The objective in sports like football, baseball, and basketball is to win the game. Each sport is played within its own distinctive tradition, according to its own internal logic, and following rules that determine what constitutes a "legitimate win." In research, the objective is to generate knowledge/understanding. Each study is conducted within a distinctive tradition, according to an internal logic, and following "rules" that determine what constitutes "legitimate knowledge" (see Think Piece #3). The internal logic of the various research traditions is grounded in assumptions about what is true (epistemology), what is real (ontology), and what is of value (axiology).

The logic of justification within a particular form or genre of research is akin to the strategies that coaches lay out for winning the game. Coaches have tremendous leeway in shaping their strategies as long as they adhere to the underlying logic and rules of the game. For example, a football coach is at liberty to use many different plays to achieve a first down, but dribbling the ball down the field is not among them. Developing the logic of justification for a qualitative dissertation in education entails an understanding of what ballgame one intends to play.

Range of Research Genres

Readers might well be thinking, "Where can I see a list of research genres that fall within the various qualitative inquiry traditions? And, more to the point, where can I get a list of the rules that must be followed for these various research 'games'?"

It is here that our sports analogy becomes a bit strained. Unlike in the world of sports, where the various types of ballgames are well defined, clearly distinct from one another, and guided by well-established rules, acceptable genres in qualitative research do not fall into nice, neat categories.[2]

Prior to the 1980s, dissertations in education adhered to the conventions of scientific inquiry and aimed to generate knowledge that was legitimate within that research tradition. Objectivity, reliability, validity, verifiability, and replicability were the touchstones for judging the legitimacy of scientific truth claims.

This was a time of relative stability in educational research, a time of "normal science," to borrow a phrase from Thomas Kuhn (1970). It was as though baseball were the only game in town, and everyone agreed that the game was worth playing. Even novice researchers were assumed to have a sense of the rules of the game, and socialization into the sport often concentrated on mastery of techniques. In short, there was more or less consensus among educational researchers on what constituted legitimate inquiry, and the dissertation process initiated novice scholars into this tradition.

Around 1980, however, a growing number of educational researchers began to explore different "ball games." Convinced that scientific inquiry did not fully illuminate all aspects of education, these scholars began groping their way toward different modes of knowing. In the process of introducing new ballgames into the arena of educational research, it was incumbent upon these explorers to articulate explicitly the nature of truth claims that their research generated, the logic through which these truth claims could be justified, and the criteria for judging the legitimacy of the truth claims.

After almost two decades of exploration, this process still continues, and the educational research community lives in what Donmoyer (1996) calls "an era of paradigm proliferation" (p. 19). In an invited speech at the 1997 meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Elliot Eisner, a leading proponent of alternative forms of knowledge representation, offered the following perspective on the evolution of qualitative research:

> I said that the emergence of the new frontier emanated from discontent with older paradigms, with a growing interest in cognitive pluralism, and in new ways of thinking about the nature of research itself. One of these new approaches is the more recent interest in arts-based research. As you know, when qualitative research emerged as a viable and definable option for educational researchers, the first tendency was to look to ethnography as the form within which to do such research. This looking to ethnography is, of course, altogether understandable. Ethnography is the child of anthropology, and anthropology is a member of the social sciences. The move from one social science to another is far less wrenching than a move from a social science to an arts- or humanities-based approach to research. The idea that the arts could provide a basis for doing research is itself regarded by more than a few as an oxymoronic notion. Yet, increasingly, researchers are recognizing that scientific inquiry is a species of research. Research is not merely a species of social science. *Virtually any careful, reflective, systematic study of phenomena undertaken to advance human understanding can count as a form of research. It all depends on how that work is pursued.* (Eisner, 1997, p. 262, emphasis added)

Interestingly, Eisner's speech marked the 10th anniversary of AERA's Special Interest Group on Qualitative Research. During the same annual meeting, a new AERA Special Interest Group on Arts-Based Educational Research was formed.

Our point is simply this. Over the past 20 years, the forms of educational research—that is, the research genre—that are available to doctoral students have grown tremendously. The ball games in which students can play vary from traditional, science-based studies to highly innovative, arts-based studies. As Eisner points out, the legitimacy of the truth claims generated through these diverse modes of inquiry depends on how the work is pursued. The logic of justification is the student's explanation of how his or her study will be pursued. This explanation goes beyond a description of the techniques that will be used, and it lays out the principles and strategies through which knowledge will be generated and warranted.

At the broadest level, therefore, crafting a conceptually coherent study necessitates a thoughtful understanding of the research tradition within which one is working and the nature of truth claims generated within that tradition. The truth claims of an empirical study, for example, are different from the truth claims of an interpretive or critical study. More narrowly, one must understand the form or genre of inquiry that one is following within the broader tradition. Most specifically, the logic of justification is crafted within the research tradition and genre.

At this point, readers may be wondering, "How do I make all these decisions? Where do I start?" It is important to keep in mind that by the time students reach the third cycle of deliberation, they have already made substantial progress in identifying with a qualitative research tradition and exploring potential research genres. (The Personal Research Profile suggested in Chapter 2 is intended to help students get in touch with these innate proclivities.) Thus, a whole new series of decisions does not unexpectedly appear during the third cycle. Rather, as suggested in the introduction to this chapter, novice researchers come to understand more clearly and explicitly in what ballpark they are planting their feet.

Planting One's Feet

It is our contention that the choice of ballpark—an affinity for a particular tradition and genre—predates any specific decisions about strategy, method, or technique. In all likelihood, this fundamental choice is based on an elusive mix of personal orientation, worldview, interests, and talents. Occasionally, we see an athlete who plays two professional sports. Michael Jordan's foray into baseball is, perhaps, the most notable recent example and provides an interesting object lesson. Despite Jordan's superb physical conditioning, his mental discipline, and his willingness to master new skills, in the end he achieved only moderate success in baseball and ultimately returned to the sport for which he was uniquely talented.

We further contend that doctoral students are more suited to engage in some modes of inquiry than in others. They bring to the dissertation a fundamental orientation for learning and knowing. Their worldview draws them to particular types of phenomena, causes them to ponder certain types of questions, and inclines them toward particular modes of inquiry. Professional experience and expertise equips them with important, and potentially useful, skills.

EXEMPLAR 4.1 Crafting a Study Consistent With One's Worldview, Personal Orientation, and Unique Talents

Title: Bringing Forth a World: Spirituality as Pedagogy

Intent of the Study: To articulate a personal understanding of spirituality as pedagogy and to portray the transformative possibilities in being and learning together in such a way as to make them accessible to other educators who are interested in spirituality as pedagogy.

Guiding Research Questions:

- What brought me to the study of spirituality as pedagogy?
- What life events have helped to shape my spirituality and pedagogy?
- How is my spirituality and pedagogy manifested in "Bringing Forth a World"?
- Through a series of meditative writings, how can I generate and articulate deeper understandings of spirituality as pedagogy?
- How can I portray essential lessons of spirituality as pedagogy?

Research Genre—Spiritual Inquiry: As I entered into this inquiry, a language emerged that allowed me to best express the ways that I engaged in this process. The inquiry process itself came to embody the spiritual. "Kairos," contemplation, meditative writings, and exegesis is the spiritual inquiry. In constructing the inquiry in this way, I drew on a language and created a context for the inquiry that was faithful to what was under study.

Consider, for example, the dissertation crafted by Marilyn Llewellyn around the concept of spirituality as pedagogy (Exemplar 4.1). For quite some time, she pondered which research genre could most appropriately frame her study and which logic of justification could guide her thinking. Working within a scientific tradition and using a scientific research genre (e.g., a quasi-experimental study) to gain insights into the essence of a spiritual pedagogy struck Marilyn as a logical inconsistency. Genres grounded in the arts and humanities (e.g., personal narrative, autobiography) or social sciences (e.g., case study, ethnography)—although possibilities—did not feel quite right. As Marilyn struggled with this issue and tried to imagine how she would carry out the study, the notion of spiritual inquiry gradually came into focus.

In all likelihood, the language in Exemplar 4.1 may strike many readers as not only unfamiliar but also completely inappropriate for a research endeavor. We chose this example precisely for its power to challenge preconceptions. To understand how spiritual inquiry can hold up as a legitimate mode of inquiry, it is important to place this research genre into a personal context and research tradition. It is relevant to know that Marilyn has an extensive background in

theological studies, is a member of a religious community, and lives her commitment to spirituality on a daily basis. Furthermore, she draws upon the writings of recognized scholars in theology and philosophy to connect her study to a long and respected tradition of spiritual inquiry. The language that Marilyn uses to create the logic of justification for her inquiry comes not from the scientific tradition but from philosophical and theological traditions. Working in an interpretive, rather than empirical, tradition also allows Marilyn to draw upon her knowledge of hermeneutics and humanistic curricula.

Most of the ideas that appear in the conceptual outline in Exemplar 4.1 were present from the outset of Marilyn's deliberations about her dissertation. During the first and second cycles of deliberation, however, Marilyn could not see the interconnections among the various ideas. Nor did she think to draw upon her existing store of knowledge about contemplation, meditation, kairos, and so on. By entering into ongoing deliberation and discourse—with herself and others—Marilyn slowly began to tap into her knowledge, using it to express what she wanted to study, why the study is important, and the mode of inquiry she would follow. At this point, she had moved from the second to the third cycle of deliberation, understood where her study was headed and had gained a sense of control over the process.

Carol offers an interesting contrast to Marilyn. The impetus for Carol's inquiry into school restructuring stemmed from her involvement in a special reform effort at a local school district. Formally trained as a curriculum development specialist, having well-honed skills in the systematic collection of extensive qualitative data, and having access to a setting rich with complexity, Carol was ideally positioned to ground her study in a qualitative/empirical tradition and to work within a genre of curriculum evaluation. Unfortunately, Carol approached her dissertation with a fixation on research techniques and a disinclination toward discursive deliberation. Consequently, she did not understand the implications of planting her feet within a tradition and genre for which she was well suited. As a result, her study contained several significant conceptual flaws.

Potential Pitfalls

When students do not explicitly understand the research genre that guides their study, they run the risk of stumbling upon several pitfalls. Indeed, several of these pitfalls are worth flagging because they shed further light on issues related to genre and logic of justification.

Pitfall—The Science Report Syndrome. Inherent in the concept of genre are conventions about the form in which a research project will be reported. Traditionally, dissertations conformed to the conventions of "the science report." The research proposal, it was assumed, would ultimately become the first three chapters of the dissertation. In short, Chapter 1 introduces the study, Chapter 2 presents the review of literature, and Chapter 3 describes the research methods.

To complete the dissertation, a fourth chapter (findings) and a fifth chapter (discussion and conclusions) would be added. To write the research proposal, students often followed a commonly prescribed outline (e.g., Castetter & Heisler, 1984; Davis & Parker, 1979; Fitzpatrick, Secrist, & Wright, 1998; Glatthorn, 1998; Manheimer, 1973; Mauch & Birch, 1983; Rudestam & Newton, 1992; Sternberg, 1981).

This scientific conception of the research proposal has become embedded in the dissertation folklore. Yet this science report format has become less and less serviceable for qualitative dissertations, especially with the emergence of interpretive modes of inquiry. For example, under the umbrella of arts-based research, Eisner (1993), Barone (1995), Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer (1995), and others have argued persuasively for a broader range of forms of knowledge representation. Also challenging the appropriateness of scientifically based structures for the proposal and dissertation has been the increasingly robust discourse on narrative forms of inquiry, which are grounded in the precepts not of science but of rhetoric, literary theory, and literary criticism.

Students like Carol, who shortchange the deliberative process, may automatically assume that all proposals and dissertations adhere to the conventions of the science report. When students are working in an interpretive or critical tradition, this creates a conceptual incongruity that undermines the integrity of their study or, worse, raises red flags about their capacity to conduct the inquiry.

Pitfall—The Kitchen Sink Syndrome. The Kitchen Sink Syndrome seems to arise when students throw a number of buzzwords into the study, apparently in a desperate attempt to justify the rigor of the research methods. Ironically, the level of thought is so superficial that the resulting impression is of a novice whose study is totally beyond his or her control. Students who failed to grasp the significance of *research tradition* and *research genre*, as well as students who think of method as technique, can be especially susceptible to this pitfall. They are also susceptible to the next pitfall.

Pitfall—The Fishing Expedition. In this pitfall, students attend to the details of data collection in the research proposal, write vaguely about analyzing data to uncover significant themes or issues, but say virtually nothing about how they will derive meaning from the analysis. In short, the logic of justification is virtually absent from their proposal. Students operating from the dysfunctional notion that they can avoid bias by taking the blank-slate approach to their topic are particularly prone to this pitfall.

Pitfall—The Rumpelstiltskin Syndrome. This pitfall is often flagged by comments that go something like this:

> My advisor has a major grant and has been studying "x" for the past few years. She's already done a lot with the quantitative data, that's her main interest. But there's a lot of qualitative data that she doesn't have time to

work with. It seems pretty interesting, and she says I can use it for my dissertation. She's not a qualitative researcher herself, although she is interested in learning more about that method.

The prospect of jump-starting one's dissertation by making use of precollected data is highly seductive. So, too, is the notion that a sizable mass of qualitative data from a large pool of "subjects" surely contains useful insights and should not go to waste. In our experience, students who succumb to this seduction are likely to find themselves striking a bad bargain and ending up like the fairy-tale princess trying to spin straw into gold. Constructing meaning from masses of data—whether collected by the student or someone else—is extremely difficult in the absence of a well-formulated intent for the study.[3]

To safeguard against these potential pitfalls, we contend that each proposal must be custom crafted so that the structural relationships between the intent of the inquiry, the mode of inquiry, and the anticipated form of the dissertation document are clearly laid out.

The Proposal: A Best Approximation of the Dissertation

In crafting such a proposal, students face a twofold challenge. One is to explain the anticipated results before knowing what will emerge from an inductive inquiry; the other is to describe the dissertation format before knowing what form can best convey the results. The key to meeting these challenges is to have a clear enough sense of the inquiry tradition, research genre, and logic of justification to explain how the inquiry will be conducted and, subsequently, reported. For example, students working in an empirical tradition may have a study that looks and reads like a science report. Students working in an interpretive tradition may have a study that looks and reads more like a scholarly book. A study within an arts-based genre of interpretive inquiry may look and read like a piece of literature. Studies within a critical tradition may take the form of a polemic.

Thus, the proposal foreshadows the format and style of the dissertation. When we say that the dissertation process is iterative, we mean that each draft brings into clearer focus the final form and content of the dissertation. The proposal is a pivotal iteration in that the student sees more clearly than before the intimations of the form that will emerge from the shadows of the puddle. The essence of the study is captured and conveyed in several key facets of the proposal—the title, the intent of the study, the guiding research questions, and the research procedures. All of these are shaped in concert with the research tradition and genre of the study.

In the next section of this chapter, we illustrate how these facets of a study fit together by discussing four qualitative/interpretive dissertations written by educational practitioners who completed their doctorates at the University of Pittsburgh.

Bringing the Dissertation Into Focus

The conceptual structure of four qualitative dissertations is presented in Exemplar 4.2. In reviewing these studies, it is not as crucial for readers to understand the topic of the study or specific terms as it is to gain a sense of how the concepts in the title flow into the statement of intent and then into the guiding research questions. It is more difficult to concisely convey how the genre is translated into research procedures, because the logic of justification is threaded throughout these dissertations. Through several extended exemplars, we use the authors' own words to explain how each approached her study and to give a sense of how language varies from study to study in keeping with the research genre.

Examples of Personal Narrative Dissertations

Pat McMahon and Lynn Richards are both seasoned teachers—one at a community college, the other at a public elementary school. As they approached the dissertation, both were struggling with their own pedagogy, wanting to incorporate a new dimension into the teaching and learning that occurred in their classrooms. In Pat's case, she was intrigued with the possibility of using writing portfolios to cultivate reflection and discourse with her composition students. Lynn was drawn to the possibility of integrating creative dramatics throughout the second-grade curriculum she was expected to teach. Both gravitated toward personal narrative as their research genre. As Pat says, "I always think in stories." Lynn was interested in "giving voice" to her young students. Exemplar 4.3 contains both the abstract from Pat's dissertation and her brief summary of her research procedures. Exemplar 4.4 contains Lynn's abstract, as well as the table of contents from her dissertation.

We include these two studies, because, as indicated in Chapter 3, the genre of narrative has attracted considerable interest among educational researchers in the past decade. In many ways, narrative—especially personal narrative—is ideally suited for professionals who want to examine their own practice. Newcomers to qualitative research may, however, simplistically assume that they are engaged in narrative inquiry merely because they are writing in a narrative style. This ignores the deeper epistemological underpinnings of narrative as a mode of generating knowledge by reconstructing the meaning of experience (Bruner, 1986, 1996; Coles, 1989; Dewey, 1938; Hopkins, 1994; Mitchell, 1981). We hope that the glimpses into Pat's and Lynn's studies illustrate the underlying process of personal narrative inquiry—start with careful documentation of one's practice (not just the events, but the thinking behind the events); create from the documentation a text that portrays one's practice; interpret the text for the embedded meanings; and create a portrayal[4] of the embedded meanings. Pat's and Lynn's descriptions of their dissertations also give a flavor of the variety of data sources and forms that can be used to support a narrative inquiry. Particularly striking in Lynn's dissertation is the table of contents, which clearly illustrates a point we

EXEMPLAR 4.2 Qualitative/Interpretive Dissertations Illustrating Different Research Genres

McMahon, P. L. (1993). *A narrative study of three levels of reflection in a college composition class: Teacher journal, student portfolios, teacher-student discourse.*

Genre: Personal narrative

Intent: The intent of my research is to explicate the concept of teacher reflective practice through a teacher journal. I will also explicate the concept of reflection in writing portfolios through a narrative study of composition students' portfolio entries and through teacher-student portfolio discourse.

Guiding Research Questions:

- What is the story of the educational encounter in a community college composition class?
- What happens when the writing teacher reflects on her own practice?
- How does a writing teacher deal with a large number of writing portfolios?
- What is the nature of reflective writing as exhibited in the portfolios of students?
- What is the nature of the discourse between students and teacher about the students' reflective writing?

Richards, L. A. (1996). *Pictures in our minds: A narrative study of the incorporation of creative dramatics as pedagogy in elementary classroom content areas.*

Genre: Personal narrative

Intent: The intent of this research is to delineate creative dramatics as pedagogy. This narrative study also investigates how primary school children's content area learning is shaped by the classroom drama process.

Guiding Research Questions:

- How can creative drama be construed as pedagogy?
- What happens when a teacher uses drama as pedagogy in an elementary classroom?
- How are the narratives of the classroom interpreted?
- What are the pedagogical implications of using creative drama in the elementary classroom?

EXEMPLAR 4.2 Continued

Konzal, J. L. (1995). *Our* changing *town, our* changing *school: Is common ground possible?*

Genre: Arts-based readers theater

Intent: The purposes of this study are to uncover the complexities of today's reform efforts in secondary schools—especially as they relate to the relationships among parents and between parents and educators engaged in reform efforts; to portray the dramas inherent in parent and educator relationships and the dilemmas facing them as they try to find common ground; and to move educators and parents to think about these dilemmas and to take action toward resolving them.

Guiding Research Questions:

- In what ways does using the metaphor of research as art rather than research as science influence the methodology and portrayal of research findings in this study?
- Based on current literature concerning a parent's role in reform efforts and on the researcher's own personal and professional experiences as a parent and an educator, what societal and educational conditions influence parent/school relationships in the context of secondary school reform?
- In terms of defining good secondary schools, "Is common ground possible among parents?" and "Is common ground possible between parents and educators?"
- What are the dilemmas faced by parents and educators as they attempt to build common understandings about "good" secondary schools, as interpreted by the researcher?

Ceroni, K. (1995). *Promises made, promises broken: A literary criticism of the Pennsylvania lead teacher experience.*

Genre: Literary criticism

Intent: The intent of this study is to create texts generated within the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Initiative in order to interpret the surface and embedded meaning within those texts.

Guiding Research Questions:

- What are some of the texts generated within the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Initiative?
- What are surface and embedded themes which emerge from these texts?
- How are the themes interpreted relative to the appearance/reality dualism inherent in the texts?
- How can these interpretations broaden our understanding of the ways in which teachers respond to professional development plans?

EXEMPLAR 4.3 A Narrative Study of Three Levels of Reflection in a College Composition Class: Teacher Journal, Student Portfolios, Teacher-Student Discourse

Abstract: This is a narrative study which focuses on the struggles of a composition teacher wishing to create a more personally meaningful learning experience for students and teacher alike. In Chapter I, I introduce my desire to involve students more rigorously in their own writing process and in the life of the class. In Chapter II, I begin to think about reflection in the composition curriculum and devise an educational encounter to engage my students in the process of reflection.

The centerpiece of this curriculum is the requirement of a writing portfolio, for which I provide no specific guidelines or model. Purposely problematizing the learning experience, I ask my students to capture their thinking both in the form of the reflective content of their portfolio and in negotiating for themselves a reflective procedure which allows them to create the structure of the portfolio itself.

Chapter III, my reflective journal, is the story of what occurs in the classroom as a result of this task. Here, I explain what transpires during the course of one semester when students are asked to construct knowledge for themselves, and I describe our work as a discourse community as we attempt to understand how knowledge is made and what it means to reflect.

In Chapter IV, I am faced with the task of analyzing 65 student portfolios in order to reach conclusions about the nature of reflection exhibited within them. Struggling to envision a conceptual framework to capture the range of material before me, I realize I am working to make meaning, trusting the same inductive process in which I had placed my students. Eventually, I see my students' writing as their means of making sense of the portfolio experience itself.

Four categories of response to the portfolio emerge: "Searching for Boundaries," "Finding a Voice," "Pursuing Connections," "Making Discoveries." I describe each mode of interpretation in Chapter V, where I present individual portrayals of students' reflection as it is represented in their writing and in their discourse.

In Chapter VI, I reflect on the lessons I have learned from this experience.

Guiding Research Questions and Research Procedures: This dissertation looks at what occurs when the reflective writing portfolio becomes the cornerstone of a community college English Composition 101 curriculum. For the purposes of this study, I have generated five guiding questions.

1. What is the story of the educational encounter in a community college composition class? and
2. What happens when the writing teacher reflects on her own practice?

These questions are addressed in the form of my own reflective journal, which I kept throughout the semester (15 weeks) in order to capture evidence of my reflective processes. In it I describe my rationale and structure for the English Composition 101 curriculum, and I explain how I shaped the educative events at the outset of the 15-week course. I continuously reflect on my own pedagogy as a way of articulating my

continued

understanding of the learning experience as it unfolds. Because I wish to present my thinking in its authentic journal form, that part of this study, Chapter III, "My Story of the Educational Encounter: A Teacher Reflects on Her Practice," is single-spaced.

3. How does a writing teacher deal with a large number of writing portfolios?

In this section, I describe my thoughts and feelings as I attempt to reach conclusions about the nature of reflection exhibited in the 65 student portfolios. I explain the stages of my inductive search to create a conceptual framework which captures the various forms of students' reflective work. I also include my reflection on theory as a means of making sense of my experience. This section of the study, Chapter IV is entitled "Facing Sixty-Five Portfolios: Reflection Relating Theory to Practice."

4. What is the nature of reflective writing as exhibited in the portfolios of students? and
5. What is the nature of the discourse between students and teacher about the students' reflective writing?

These questions are addressed in Chapter V, "A Conceptual Framework by Which to Consider Portfolio Reflection and Teacher-Student Discourse." This chapter contains excerpts of reflective work from the student portfolios as well as the ongoing discourse that occurred between students and teacher when students are encouraged to use their writing as a means for reflection. The conceptual framework comprises four categories, and in each of these categories, I present individual student portrayals. These portrayals allow me to capture the students' portfolio content and interpret how this content exemplifies the reflective characteristics of its category. At the same time, these portrayals also capture the nature of the discourse between students and teacher. For evidence of this reflection, I refer to correspondence in the form of notes between my students and me as well as moments from my own taped reactions to teacher-student conferences.

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made earlier—qualitative dissertations do not automatically follow the format of a science report.

Examples of Dissertations Based in the Literary Arts[5]

Like Pat and Lynn, Jean Konzal and Kathy Ceroni brought years of professional experience and expertise to the dissertation. Yet neither entered the dissertation process with an explicit understanding of their research genre. Rather, the genre emerged as they became more deeply immersed in their studies and struggled with what style and format would suit the nature of knowledge they were generating. Both of their studies serve to underscore the iterative nature of qualitative dissertations. Researchers working in scientific genres generally would not revise the title of their study, statement of intent, or guiding questions once the proposal was completed. In qualitative studies—especially in the interpretive tradition—

EXEMPLAR 4.4 Pictures in Our Minds: A Narrative Study of the Incorporation of Creative Dramatics as Pedagogy in Elementary Classroom Content Areas

Abstract: This narrative study represents one elementary educator's search for pedagogical insight. I begin by describing my initial professional orientations toward the field of creative dramatics and my interest in how an elementary classroom could be infused with drama activities across the curriculum. Throughout the study, I connect my personal experiences with the thoughts of other researchers, drama theorists, teachers, and especially with the voices of my own students.

Over a span of six months, I document my second-grade classroom practices through the multiple lenses of Teacher Journal, lesson plans, and audio/videotapes. I also include those modes of student response which informed my thinking: learning logs, essay writings, journals, audio/videotape transcriptions and drama debriefing field notes. Through narrative vignettes, I explore the implicit contradictions in the varied roles and generic responsibilities of the elementary classroom teacher, especially in how the boundaries of Teacher and Student become blurred as drama activities are incorporated into each content area. My examination of the ongoing drama activities and debriefings are further guided by two questions: "What are my Intentions as Teacher?" and "What are the Children's Perceptions?"

Within this instructional context, I portray how my pedagogic philosophies, the connections between Home and School Life, and daily classroom events collide with, meld into, and transform the prescribed language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science curricula. I then synthesize these portrayals into broader pedagogic contexts by construing drama as four analogies: "Drama as Knowing," "Drama as Discourse," "Drama as Narrative," and "Drama as Synectics." These categories are described through classroom examples of the children's diverse ways of making meaning, extended student-to-student discussions, contextualization of drama experiences through shared narrative discourse, Teacher-Student sharing of role and life stage synergy, and how creative drama is embedded within the teaching-learning process. I conclude this study with some broad observations for other elementary educators who are committed to incorporating drama as pedagogy within their own classroom life.

Chapter I: Introduction
Intent of the Study
Guiding Questions
Importance of the Study

Chapter II: Drama Definitions, A Selected Review of the Literature
Definitions of Drama in Education
Drama as Subject and as Process
Types of Educational Drama
Classroom Drama Situated in Educational Context

Chapter III: Drama Data, The Study Process
Narrative Inquiry
Description of the School Setting

continued

The Children
Duration of This Study
The Data Collection Process
Data Analysis Procedures
The Narrative Genre of the Study

Chapter IV: Drama Depictions, The Narratives of Our Classroom
Drama and Pedagogic Practice
A Dramatic Picture
Dramatic Teacher Performance
The Drama of Daily Classroom Routines
Drama and Plans—The Beginning of the Drama Process
Drama and Unexpected Events
Drama and Home-School Connections
Drama in the Elementary Content Areas
Dramatic Thinking

Chapter V: Drama Disclosures, Drama as Analogy
Drama as Knowing
Drama as Discourse
Drama as Narrative
Drama as Synectics

Chapter VI: Drama as Pedagogy, Observations for the Elementary Educator
A Final Observation

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such revisions are likely to occur as the portrayal comes more clearly into focus with each successive draft of the dissertation.

As an educational administrator, teacher, and parent, Jean was able to look at the issue of school reform as both a provider and consumer of education. Troubled by resistance to and failure of many school reform initiatives, Jean began an in-depth study of one town's reform efforts. Given the amount of time Jean spent with school personnel and citizens of the town, as well as the 1,000 pages of interview transcripts she amassed, she might have framed her study as an ethnography or case study. Yet neither genre seemed to do justice to the passionate voices she was hearing. In a final section of her dissertation, Jean describes the process that led her to the arts-based genre of readers theater. Exemplar 4.5 contains several excerpts from her dissertation. The first, taken from her abstract, sets the stage for the study. Next is the table of contents, which illustrates how distinctive a dissertation structure can be. The final excerpts, taken from her afterword, highlight some of the difficulties that arose from Jean's decision to use readers theater.

Kathy, like Jean, did not explicitly set out to do a literary study. Indeed, she had misgivings about the topic for her study—an examination of the Lead Teacher Initiative in Pennsylvania. Yet having participated as a research assistant in an earlier study on this topic (Ceroni & Garman, 1994), Kathy was intrigued at some level with notions of teacher empowerment, peer/collegial support of professional

EXEMPLAR 4.5 Our *Changing* Town, Our *Changing* School: Is Common Ground Possible?

Abstract: Attempts to reform secondary-school classroom practices have been a focus of educators throughout this century. But each time changes have been attempted they have been met with resistance and have eventually failed. Virtually unexplored among the reasons for failure has been the inability of the schools to engage the parents in the reform efforts and to create common understandings of "good" secondary schools. The purposes of this study are to uncover the complexities of today's reform efforts in secondary schools—especially as they relate to the difficulties faced by parents and educators as they attempt to come to common ground in defining classroom practices that are found in good secondary schools; to portray the dramas inherent in parent and educator relationships and the dilemmas facing them as they try to find common ground, using readers theater as a vehicle for the portrayal; and to move educators and parents to think about these dilemmas and to take action towards resolving them.

Authors' Commentary: Notice that the intent of Jean's study embodies not only the generation of knowledge, but also a call to action. It was this latter intent that pushed Jean to find a vehicle for promoting dialogue that could create common understandings among parents and educators. Readers theater eventually emerged as that vehicle, which, in turn, led to the following format for the dissertation. In addition to the sections and chapters listed below, Jean's dissertation also included four appendixes that explained the inquiry process, the setting, and the results of two surveys in a more traditional manner.

Prologue

Chapter 1. Introduction

Chapter 2. Inquiry Approach Explained
- Purpose of Study
- Guiding Questions
- Educational Criticism (Appreciation, Representation, Researcher as Educational Critic)

Chapter 3. The Playwright's Point of View

Chapter 4. Societal Context
- The Public Views Education
- Today's Societal Conditions

Chapter 5. Problematizing the Parent/Educator Relationship in the Schooling Drama
- Building Common Notions of a "Good" Secondary School Conclusions

The Readers Theater Scripts

Chapter 6. Playbill

Chapter 7. Two Readers Theater Scripts

continued

Epilogue

Chapter 8. Our *Changing* Town, Our *Changing* School: Is Common Ground Possible?

Chapter 9. Is Common Ground Possible? Parents and Educators Speak

Afterword

On Becoming a Researcher/On Becoming an Artist

Authors' Commentary: Our efforts to summarize Jean's study may have created the erroneous impression that Jean's decision to use readers theater was determined solely by the intent of her study. In reality, this choice of genre was also influenced by an interest in theater that predated the dissertation.

Afterword Excerpt 1: When I made the decision to return to school to pursue a doctorate, I had to make another decision—to put my newly found passion for theater into a box and place it on a shelf for the time being. For the three years prior to returning to school I had given voice to the creative part of myself through theater. I thought the decision to return to school would force me to put that aside.

Authors' Commentary: Jean was well into the data-gathering phase of her dissertation when she attended an Arts-Based Educational Research Institute sponsored by the American Educational Research Association. There, she met Robert Donmoyer and June Yennie-Donmoyer, who introduced her to the concept of readers theater. As she indicates in the following excerpt, this artistic form for representing the results of her study was very seductive.

Afterword Excerpt 2: When I returned from the institute I debated with myself whether or not to commit to such a project. Readers theater seemed to be the perfect medium for my work. Parent voices could be presented directly. Parents would, at long last, be heard unedited. But, I was afraid. I knew I could write a report of my findings in a traditional qualitative report—I had done that before. But could I actually write a script? The more I thought about it, though, the more seduced I became by the idea and the easier it seemed to do. I started talking with others. "I'm going to write a script. I'm going to present my study in play form." The more I said this, the more I convinced myself that I could do it, that it wouldn't be that hard a task.

And then I began the process. Like most qualitative researchers I found myself buried in data. Where should I begin? How should I begin? As I began to organize and reorganize my data I began to realize that I had dug myself a very large hole. Not only had I committed myself to making sense out of this data in a way that would be credible in the research community, but I had also committed myself to do it in an aesthetically pleasing way. While I was a novice researcher, I soon discovered I was even more of a novice when it came to writing Readers Theater scripts.

I had none of the craft of script writing available to me. I have to admit to a very naive view of the craft. All I had to do was piece together dialogue from the parent transcripts, and voila, a script would emerge! Wrong! The response to my first attempts was sobering.

Learning the craft of writing a Readers Theater script was a challenge for me. I came to the process with little understanding of what it takes to craft a script. Not only did I

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have no experience writing a script of any kind, I had to learn how to craft a Readers Theater script which was significantly different from a traditional script. . . . When I think back to my glib pronouncements that I will write a script, I am embarrassed by my naivete. Any art form, in addition to requiring an aesthetic sensibility, requires mastery of the techniques of the form.

Authors' Commentary: This passage from Jean's afterword underscores an important issue in crafting a study. When Jean came upon the idea of Readers Theater, it seemed to satisfy three converging needs—her growing affinity for theater, a desire to cultivate her aesthetic nature, and the intent of her study. As Jean points out, however, she had no experience in actually writing scripts, nor a realistic appraisal of her capacity to create such artistic pieces. In the end, Jean struggled not only with the act of creating art, but with the tension between what constitutes research and what constitutes art. Jean had already completed a major draft of her dissertation when her tacit epistemological assumptions about art and research not only emerged but clashed. Coming to grips with these issues necessitated a rewriting of virtually the entire dissertation. To preserve the artistic integrity she was striving to create in the dissertation, and to satisfy strongly embedded assumptions of rigorous inquiry, Jean included four substantive appendixes that described her inquiry process, the context for her study, and the results of two surveys in a more traditional, science-like style.

We offer this commentary not to dissuade students from engaging in an arts-based genre of qualitative inquiry, but as a warning to proceed with caution. Arts-based genres, particularly the notion of telling stories that has become so popular in the past decade, can be extremely seductive, especially to those with an aversion to statistics. Yet the mere attraction to such genres is not enough. Through the Personal Research Profile, students are encouraged to carefully weigh the talents and skills that they might bring to such an inquiry. As Jean's experience illustrates, lack of preparation can be overcome if students are willing to commit to an intensive learning process that extends the time for completing the dissertation. Without such commitment—and integrity—students run the risk of completing a conceptually flawed dissertation and undermining the credibility of such studies within their university and field of study.

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development, and the contributions that experienced teachers might make to their own districts' efforts at school reform. Exemplar 4.6 contains the abstract from Kathy's dissertation, as well as the titles of each chapter and the different stances she adopts as she moves through the study.

In a sense, these latter two studies contradict a major theme of this chapter: Thinking through the research genre in conjunction with the intent of the study is crucial to crafting a conceptually coherent study. Neither Jean nor Kathy was in a position to act on this advice. Only by entering into their inquiries and struggling with the meanings encountered were they able to come to grips with the issue of genre. This was not ideal, but in the end, both women were able to

EXEMPLAR 4.6 Promises Made, Promises Broken: A Literary Criticism of the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Experience

Abstract: This study is a personal odyssey of my struggle to come to terms with some of the recurring events and conflicts I have experienced as a teacher. Using the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Initiative as my context, I examine its roots in teacher development reform discourse and shape an official story of how it was conceived in Pennsylvania.

After interviewing lead teachers and non-lead teachers, I created a series of encounters which I call "inner views storied." Using literary theory (narrative) as a rationale, I create texts that portray the stories of my encounters with my participants in a way that enables the reader to hear our conversations. Since all of the characters in the inner views storied are female, a feminine perspective is present. Interestingly, a disproportionate number of Pennsylvania lead teachers are women.

Using principles of literary and educational criticism, I interpret the texts of the inner views storied, focusing on the surface and embedded meanings in them. I interpret the themes that emerge from a critical theory perspective and convey the appearance/reality dualism within the texts by showing that the Lead Teacher Initiative represents a symbolic effort to "professionalize" teaching, while the lived experience of the teachers involved in the lead teacher programs (mostly women) reveals the effects of proletarianization.

Through this interpretive study, I developed an understanding not only of the ways in which the dominant ideology functions to oppress my class and gender, but also of the ways in which I have acted in complicity with the very forces I have been struggling to combat. The journey has been painful and the wisdom I have come to is a bitter wisdom, yet paradoxically, it has liberated me from the rational, technical mind-set that imbues our culture and has made me available for new beginnings.

Chapter Outline

I. The Promise and the Caution: Teacher Leadership as Resource
(Stance—Teacher as Researcher)

II. The Promise in Perspective: A View of Teacher Leadership Incentive Plans
(Stance—Researcher as Inquirer)

III. The Promise Made: The Official Story of the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Initiative
(Stance—Researcher as Documenter)

IV. Teachers' "Inner Views" of the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Experience
(Stance—Researcher as Literary Theorist)

V. The Promise Revisited: An Interpretation of the Contradictions Embedded in the "Inner Views Storied" of the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Experience
(Stance—Researcher as Literary Critic)

VI. The Promise Abandoned: The Illusory Nature of Teacher Leadership Reform
(Stance—Researcher as Teacher)

complete credible studies because of the scholarly integrity and perseverance they brought to the process. In practical terms, Jean and Kathy probably invested an extra year in order to bring their dissertations to fruition.

Recapping the Iterative Nature of the Proposal

Perhaps it seems a bit odd that, in a chapter on the proposal, we have presented exemplars of completed dissertations. From our standpoint, however, this approach served several practical needs. First, dissertation proposals are very elusive documents. Although our files are replete with many artifacts of qualitative dissertations, completed drafts of research proposals are noticeably missing. Over the years, we have returned these documents with comments and corrections to students after the proposal has been formally reviewed by their committee. Second, as Pat McMahon says,

> The proposal is weird. When the committee met about my proposal, I felt like a student. I had an idea of what I wanted to do. I thought I understood qualitative research enough to do the study. But I wasn't certain. There was a lot of anxiety with the proposal. I thought I had it right, but did I really? It was all just an idea at that point. By the dissertation defense, I felt like a scholar. I owned the study. I knew it inside and out.

The tentativeness of students' relationship with their study makes it difficult to illustrate the interrelationships among the intent and process of the study. Although a good proposal is the clearest articulation of the dissertation that the student has made up to this point in the process, it is still only the student's best educated guess about the final portrayal. Students continue to learn more about the study as they work through it. In the process, the contours of the study change. This does not mean that the study veers radically onto a new path, but rather that the details and nuances of the image are constantly becoming clearer. Because the image is being portrayed in language, the language/words may change to convey the image more clearly. This means the title, statement of intent, and guiding questions may change. This is part of the iterative process.

It is our hope that the four dissertations discussed in this chapter illustrate the conceptual cohesiveness that can still be rather fragile in the proposal. In addition, those who want to see examples of how the logic of justification is woven throughout a study can access copies of these completed dissertations. However, readers may be wondering what they must do to complete a submissible draft of the proposal. In the next chapter, we address specific issues that students can consider as they draft their research proposals.

Notes

1. The absence of a discrete "review of literature" reflects our perspective that relevant discourses are woven throughout the proposal to explain and support each of these aspects.

2. For those with a literary orientation, it may be helpful to think in terms of literary genres (e.g., poetry, drama, novel, short story). Within these genres are conventions of form and style that give each type of literature its distinctive character yet allow for variations (e.g., poetry can take the form of odes, sonnets, Haiku, and epics). During the 20th century, as these classical conventions were challenged, variations of forms within genres proliferated, and distinctions between genres blurred. This situation mirrors the situation in educational research more directly than do the more clear-cut distinctions among various forms of sports.

3. It should be noted that a solid study can be crafted around existing data if students are able to create a meaningful, conceptual framework for the inquiry and if the data are sufficiently rich to fulfill the intent of the study. Several books that deal with secondary analysis of qualitative data may be helpful in realistically assessing the possibilities of building a dissertation around a subset of a larger study (e.g., Hammersley, 1997; Hinds, Vogel, et al., 1997; Jensen & Allen, 1996; Morse, 1994; Reinharz, 1993; Szabo & Strang, 1997; Thorne, 1998).

4. The concept of *portrayal* is crucial to understanding the nature of knowledge generated through qualitative inquiries. We return to it again in Chapters 5, 7, and 8. For now, it may be useful to think of portrayal as the form in which information is presented and/or ideas are represented. Tables, graphs, charts, and figures are portrayals commonly used to present information or data in scientific research reports. Stories, poems, readers theater, artwork, music, and dance are portrayals more commonly used to convey complex ideas in a holistic fashion within qualitative/interpretive modes of inquiry.

5. We do not want to create a false dichotomy between narrative and literary arts. The distinction we are making between the two sets of studies is based on the genre claimed by each researcher.

CHAPTER FIVE

Crafting the Dissertation Proposal: Part 2

The outcome of the third cycle of deliberation should be a coherent research proposal that communicates two "metamessages" to committee members. One, a viable and worthwhile study is being proposed. Two, the student is prepared to and capable of conducting the study. Students, particularly those with little or no proposal-writing experience, often express uncertainty about accomplishing this task, asking questions such as, "What goes into a research proposal? What does a research proposal look like? How do I write it? How long is it supposed to be?"

Micheline and Marilyn, whom we have introduced in earlier chapters, offer an interesting contrast in how students might respond to the anxiety that often lurks beneath such questions. Shortly after joining our dissertation study group, they recounted respective stories about learning to ski. Micheline registered for an introductory course that began with a series of lectures in an auditorium, continued with skill training in the gym, and finally moved to preliminary practice on the beginners' slopes. Marilyn, after a brief introductory lesson on the beginners' slope, hopped on a ski lift, rode to the top of a mountain, and suddenly found herself careening down an advanced slope with the dawning realization that perhaps she had not fully mastered all the nuances of skiing—most notably, techniques for stopping.

Their approach to crafting a proposal parallels their approach to skiing. Micheline proceeded cautiously, wanting to understand as fully and explicitly as possible what she was going to be doing and why. Marilyn plunged in and began reviewing discourses related first to a study on peace education, then to a study on education and social justice, and finally to a study on spirituality and pedagogy.

Although Micheline and Marilyn may be a bit extreme in their respective learning styles, they illustrate the range of approaches that students might take in tackling the proposal. Because it is impossible to have all of the information one needs before starting to write the proposal, a mid-range approach is useful. Previous cycles of deliberation should have given students a fairly good sense of which path they are following. By continuing in a deliberative and discursive

mode, they can continue to gather—incrementally—the information and resources needed to complete the research proposal.

We emphasize "incrementally," because in our experience, students who flounder in this cycle assume that they can master qualitative research by taking one "methods" course, reading a how-to dissertation guide, or pressing a perceived expert for specific answers to procedural questions. Often, we receive calls from students like Ginnie who have heard of our interest in qualitative research. With great urgency, Ginnie pleaded for a meeting to discuss her study. Although she still had quite a few predissertation requirements to complete, she frantically latched onto each shred of information as though it were an intellectual life preserver. The simplistic and erroneous conclusions she drew from what we viewed as "conversation openers" took our breath away. At some point in the conversation, we were overwhelmed by the image of a swimmer caught in an undertow, desperately flailing against powerful currents she could not remotely begin to control. The learning necessary to write a research proposal requires a modicum of calmness in which discursive deliberation can occur.

With this in mind, we pick up where we left off at the end of Chapter 4. Having looked broadly at how the various facets of the study must interconnect and support each other, we now address more specific issues that merit attention as students craft their proposals. First, we respond to the question "What goes into a research proposal?" by suggesting a general structure for the document. Each subsequent section of the chapter focuses more closely on one section of the research proposal. The chapter concludes with a summary of points to keep in mind as one crafts a research proposal.

General Structure of a Qualitative Dissertation Proposal

Whereas authors of some dissertation guides (e.g., Castetter & Heisler, 1984; Davis & Parker, 1979; Fitzpatrick et al., 1998; Glatthorn, 1998; Manheimer, 1973; Mauch & Birch, 1983; Rudestam & Newton, 1992; Sternberg, 1981) recommend a standard outline for the proposal, we have less confidence that such an approach is suited to proposing a qualitative inquiry, especially those conducted within the interpretive or critical traditions. As indicated in Chapter 4, crafting a research proposal is less a matter of plugging information into a formulaic outline and more a matter of thinking through the conceptual relationships among the intent of the study, the inquiry process, and the anticipated results of the inquiry. Yet well-conceived proposals do address several crucial issues:

- What is under study?
- Why is the study necessary and important?
- How will the inquiry be conducted?
- What results are anticipated?
- How will the anticipated results contribute to a body of knowledge?

The proposal guides committee members into the study, starting with a broad picture of what is intended and ending with details on how the inquiry will be conducted. Each component of the proposal calls attention to some aspect of the picture. In brief, these include the following:

Title: Announces in a nutshell the subject of the study and often the mode of inquiry

Introduction: Orients readers to the purpose, content, and organization of the document and provides some background to place the study in a context

The Study: Provides a concise overview or synopsis of the inquiry

Statement of Intent: Communicates the purpose of the study and, ideally, alludes to its significance for a particular audience/discourse community

Guiding Research Questions: Lay out the conceptual structure of the entire inquiry

Review of Relevant Discourses: Connects specific aspects of the inquiry to broader bodies of knowledge

Research Procedures: Explain how each guiding question will be addressed

Anticipated Portrayals: Describes what form of representation the researcher envisions creating to capture the phenomenon under study and to convey the lessons learned from the inquiry

Tentative Outline of Dissertation Chapters: Summarizes how the researcher envisions laying out the dissertation document

In the remainder of this chapter, we explore issues related to each of these components of the research proposal. Again, we caution that crafting the relationships among all facets of the inquiry requires constantly working back and forth among the various sections. Trying to approach the writing in a linear fashion is likely to be both frustrating and counterproductive.

Title of the Study

The title of the dissertation conveys the conceptual essence of the study, ideally capturing both what is under study and the mode of inquiry to be used. Consider several titles taken from studies completed by members of our dissertation study group (see Exemplar 5.1).

Surprisingly, many students seem to give little thought to a title for their study. Precursors to the research proposal are often untitled, or an early title is retained even though the focus of the study evolves. In a well-crafted title, each word should relate to a key concept in the study. In turn, each concept in the title should be explained in the body of the proposal, and the relationships among the concepts should be made clear. To illustrate this point and several others related to the research proposal, we draw upon Micheline's research proposal. Because

EXEMPLAR 5.1 Dissertation Titles

1. The Practice of Hospital Education: A Grounded Theory Study
2. An Explication of Human Resources Supervision: A Grounded Theory Study of a Public Alternative High School
3. Students in a Special Program for Gifted Female Adolescents: A Conceptual Case Study for Planning Curriculum
4. A Hermeneutic Study of Educational Myth: Implications for Clinical Supervision
5. A Narrative Study of Three Levels of Reflection in a College Composition Class: Teacher Journal, Student Portfolios, Teacher-Student Discourse
6. Promises Made, Promises Broken: A Literary Criticism of the Lead Teacher Experience in Pennsylvania
7. Meanwhile Back at the Ranch: A Study of Principals and School Reform
8. From Angst to Art: On Being Junior Faculty in the Academy

Authors' Commentary: The first five studies have fairly conservative and straightforward titles—stating explicitly what is under study and the research genre (i.e., grounded theory, case study, hermeneutic study, narrative). In all but Title 4, the research genre also flags the nature of the portrayal to be generated.

The other three titles have a more literary quality that reflects the authors' stronger, more explicit orientation to narrative and arts-based modes of inquiry. Students who have sufficient artistic or narrative sensibility to undertake such studies often have at least an intuitive sense of aesthetics. With the more literary phrases in the titles, they intend to convey metaphorically or imagistically the essence of the insights generated through the inquiry.

Interestingly, the last title implicitly signals that the study is arts-based yet does not directly indicate the research genre or nature of the portrayal to be generated. As the student has struggled to gain command of her study, we have begun to speculate that a more straightforward title might have provided her with a clearer sense of direction. We make this point as a caution to students who might get so enamored of using an artistic or literary title that they obscure the conceptual structures of their study.

Title 7 is also interesting because the final wording emerged after the student had completed a first draft of the dissertation, recognized the document's lack of conceptual coherence, and did a major rewrite to frame the study as a personal narrative. The phrase "meanwhile back at the ranch" captures the central message that the student conveys in the study: While school superintendents are often off campus dealing with external issues affecting a district, building principals remain behind to tend to daily operations.

Also incorporated into Titles 2, 3, and 5 is the context of the study. Over time, we have come to have mixed feelings about including this information in the title. Early on, when many of our colleagues were still leery about qualitative dissertations, this seemed to allay some misgivings by clearly flagging the inquiry as practice based, with no claims for scientific prediction or generalizability. If students could convincingly argue the merits of studying a particular context, committee members seemed satisfied. On the other hand, including the context

continued

sometimes obscured a student's understanding of the intent of the inquiry. The context, rather than serving to situate the question under study, became the focal point of the study. In such cases, the "So what?" of the study seemed to get lost, and the dissertation took on a narcissistic quality that contributed little of substance to the discourse. Yet we are reluctant to state categorically that the context of the study should not be included in the title of the dissertation. We flag this as a judgment call that requires students' explicit deliberation.

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this example is rather extensive, it appears as a case example at the end of the chapter. See Part 1 for our commentary about this illustrative dissertation title.

Introduction to the Dissertation Proposal

The introductory section of the research proposal accomplishes two major purposes. First, it orients readers to the purpose and organization of the document itself; and second, it begins to frame the study. One reason we are reluctant to prescribe a standard outline for the research proposal is the variety of formats we have seen students use to accomplish these purposes. Decisions about arranging various "chunks" of information are often shaped by students' style of conceptualizing and writing, the nature of the study, and finding a narrative flow that feels right.

Orienting Readers to the Proposal

The first purpose to be accomplished in the introductory section is providing readers with a general orientation to the contents and organization of the research proposal. Some might argue that this is the purpose of the table of contents, but this section of the introduction provides some insight into the thinking behind the organization. Micheline, for example, begins her document with a section titled "Summary" that describes the intellectual purpose served by the proposal and its organization. This is followed by a table of contents and then by Chapter 1 (see Case Example 5.1, Part 2). Other proposals begin more conventionally with "Chapter 1—Introduction." This, in turn, may begin with a subsection titled "Background to the Study." The point to keep in mind is the importance of letting readers know what to anticipate in the proposal document. This is especially important when students are not following the conventions of a science-like format.

Rachel, for example, was crafting a proposal for a grounded theory study, the first qualitative dissertation to be undertaken in her highly science-oriented program. She worked very hard to craft a proposal that would signal the more interpretive approach she planned to take with her dissertation. Just as Rachel was getting ready to circulate her document to her committee, one member offhandedly mentioned, "I assume you've followed the format used to prepare grant pro-

posals for the National Institutes of Health." This precipitated a temporary panic, because the proposal did not remotely resemble a typical NIH grant submission. Rachel coped with the shock of this comment in several ways. First, she checked with her committee chair, with whom she had been engaged in discursive deliberations, and confirmed that her chair understood and supported the format of her proposal. Next, she carefully reviewed her introductory paragraphs, making sure she explained not only how the proposal was organized but also why that organization was appropriate given the inquiry tradition and research genre of her study. Finally, she sorted through and articulated assumptions that might be underpinning her committee member's comment. Once Rachel understood where he was coming from, she made sure that she was able to articulate her own assumptions. She circulated the document as written and successfully defended her proposal 2 weeks later. At the end of the meeting, one committee member commented that Rachel's document was among the most clearly written and conceptualized dissertation proposals he had ever read. This positive outcome was due, in large part, to the clarity with which Rachel had framed her study.

Framing the Study

Framing the study entails giving readers an overall sense of what the study is about, why it is significant, and how it will be conducted. Although each of these issues is developed more fully in subsequent sections of the research proposal, the introductory section provides an initial, broad-brush look at the study. Imagine walking into an art gallery and spotting a picture hanging on the opposite wall. One gets a general impression of the frame and the subject of the picture. By approaching the picture gradually, the viewer notices more details and can see them in relation to the holistic image. When dissertation authors plunge too quickly into the details of the study, it is as though they have zoomed in on a small fragment of a large and complex picture without giving readers the benefit of an initial, overall impression. Several issues arise in the process of framing one's study.

Situating Oneself in the Study

One way to begin framing the study is to provide contextual background from a personal perspective, essentially addressing the questions "What brought me to this study?" and "Why do I find it compelling?" As mentioned in Chapter 2, the student's personal background (including discipline, field of study, and professional context/role) forms a backdrop to the intent of the study. Earlier deliberations, such as writing a Personal Research Profile, can now serve as source material for writing a context for the study.

Some students erroneously assume that they should not mention any background information because doing so will show that they are biased. By pretending no prior involvement in the focus of the study, they hope to demonstrate objectivity. Such dysfunctional notions are sometimes reinforced by erroneous

messages from advisors who do not understand qualitative—especially interpretive—research. For example, an international student had begun to conceptualize a dissertation that would examine issues that students from China confront as they adjust to higher education in the United States. Upon hearing this, a visiting scholar said, "But you can't study that! You're a Chinese woman studying in the United States." Similarly, when Paula shared the idea of studying her own pedagogy with other art educators, several responded, "That's not a good idea. You couldn't be objective about your own teaching."

Such comments are indicative of an empirical research tradition and science-based genre. Within that tradition and genre, the researcher assumes a detached, objective stance and writes in a neutral, depersonalized voice. The following comments made during a dissertation meeting flag a classic carryover from this science-like approach to research: One faculty committee member commented,

> I found this dissertation to be one of the best I've read in a long time. I'm troubled by it, but I really liked it. It read almost like a novel in places. I really like it . . . but I'm troubled by the first person references. I tell *my* students, *Never* use "I."

A second member then said that he found the writing to be refreshing, but that the candidate was lucky to have committee members who were sympathetic to her approach. "Not all faculty," he added, "would be so understanding."

The idea that the candidate is "lucky" and that the dissertation is acceptable only because of a sympathetic committee misses the point. The student, working within a qualitative/interpretive tradition and a personal narrative genre, would have created logical inconsistencies by writing in the third person.

Searching for Voice

The notion that scholarly writing can be personalized often comes as a major surprise to students. Likewise, when students first start to write from this stance and voice, the results can be self-conscious and awkward. Faculty may be annoyed by the excessive amount of personal detail or a confessional tone in the writing. In our experience, an excessive focus on this early writing—an intensive effort to make students adopt a more scholarly voice—is counterproductive. Rather, it is more useful for students to elaborate on certain aspects of the background, such as the setting within which the idea for the study came to light. As such descriptions expand, they often contain clues to the "So what?" of the study and may also help to clarify a setting or context for the dissertation study itself. As the study begins to take shape and students gain a better command of the intent of the study, they often rewrite the introduction with little or no external prompting. Even mild feedback about the need to make the introduction more concise leads to an appropriate rewriting. Exemplar 5.2 contains a series of paragraphs written by Melanie over 8 months. In each case, she tries to write her way into the study, coming at it from a slightly different angle.

EXEMPLAR 5.2 Example of Evolving Introduction

August 1996: While I was director of a job-readiness program at a community college, I had the opportunity of meeting and interacting with single moms who were receiving welfare. The purpose of this project was to assist the participants (the target population, single parents on welfare) in preparing for employment. For some of the students, the program provided the academic preparation needed to enroll in a job training program. For others, it meant preparation for a successful job search. The goal of both groups was to obtain employment, become economically self-sufficient and leave the welfare roles. My role in this program was very similar to that of a school principal.

January 1997: It is necessary to consider the historical perspective of poverty and public assistance, in order to get a sense of how the current welfare initiatives have evolved. There are several significant periods in the historical development of public assistance programs in the United States. As early as 1911, public assistance, known as Mother's Pension Laws, was created for the purpose of providing financial support for widows and wives with disabled husbands. Reinforcing the ideology of domesticity and motherhood, this financial assistance entitled women to remain in the home and care for her children.

April 1997: More than eight years ago, I began working with women who were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), also known as public assistance or welfare. Until that time, in my position at the community college as an administrator of community services, I had the responsibility of creating and implementing vocational education programs to meet the learning needs of special populations (i.e., adults with mental retardation; staff development for human service agencies). Because of my experiences with developing vocational curriculum in response to learning needs, I was asked to direct the demonstration project intended to serve single parents who were receiving public assistance . . .

Authors' Commentary: In each of the preceding paragraphs, the student tries to introduce her study. In the first draft, she focuses on women who participated in a program she directed. This implies that the women will be the centerpiece of her study and begs the question, "So what?" The second draft plunges the reader into a historical account of welfare reform without indicating *why* it is "necessary to consider the historical perspective of poverty and public assistance." No connection to education is made in this introduction. In the third draft, the student begins to establish the context for her study by addressing the proverbial who, what, when, where, and why questions. In the process, she begins to link education, poverty, and welfare, as well as to connect herself as program director with a population of women who will be part of the study. One of the noteworthy points about these drafts is that at no time did we give the student specific feedback that some revision was needed to help readers enter into her study. She did this instinctively in the process of coming to grips with her own study.

The refinement of this student's thinking is reflected in the evolution of the title for her study. An early title was "Journey Through Poverty: A Case Study of Education for Women on Welfare." A second title was "Women's Journey Through Poverty: Educational Implications of Welfare Reform Policy." The third—and probably final—title is "Women's Journey Through Poverty: A Case for Education in Welfare Policy."

Bridging From Personal to Public

Starting with an account of one's personal interest in the topic for the dissertation is only a first step in framing a study. The frame must also establish a conceptual bridge between the student's personal interests and broader, public discourses. Without such a bridge, students run the risks of naïveté, narcissism, or solipsism. Often, a few key references are integrated into the personal narrative, thereby giving a preliminary sense of which discourse communities would find the study of interest and why.

Often, the introductory section ends with the statement of intent for the study and a list of the guiding research questions. These might, however, be incorporated into a section called The Study.

The Study

While we are discussing the importance of framing the study and providing an initial orientation to the inquiry, we want to address the notion of including a section called The Study. This is a fairly straightforward description of the inquiry. It includes the intent of the study; flags the mode of inquiry; and concisely summarizes key procedural issues, including the "what, why, who, where, when, and how" of the study. Two major issues confront authors as they craft this part of their proposal: One is when to write this section, and the other is where to place it in the document.

When students first begin to talk about their study, they often ramble in a very unfocused way. Conversations often have a stream-of-consciousness quality as students skip from experiences related to their topic to questions about method to speculations about potential study participants or location to musings about outcomes. Early drafts of the proposal often have this same rambling quality.

Gradually, as the study comes into focus, oral descriptions become not only more focused but also more informative. What took 15 or 20 minutes to communicate now takes 5. What left others scratching their heads in bewilderment now elicits nods of understanding. By the same token, the document itself acquires a clearer focus and structure. Ideally, a coherent narrative flow emerges that invites readers into the world of the study. Unfortunately, over time, students may become so conversant with their study that they forget that others would welcome a short, to-the-point explanation.

Recently, a student asked us to review and comment on the draft of his dissertation proposal. From the outset, we were plunged into discourses about learning disabilities interspersed with personal anecdotes about social and behavioral problems exhibited by students with certain types of disabilities. Juxtaposed to this information about the topic of the study was information about the student's anticipated mode of inquiry. As we waded through this material, we wondered, "Why are we reading all this stuff? What's the point of this study?

Where's this leading?" The first glimmer of an overall description of the study came after 75 pages, when we encountered a set of guiding research questions. But even these did not give us a clear sense of the big picture.

Granted, a well-crafted proposal will include a great deal of detail. But if students plunge right into the detail, then readers, specifically committee members, can get lost. Incorporating a section called The Study can prevent readers' frustration and impatience. Essentially, this section functions like an abstract, describing in two or three paragraphs what is under study; why it is important to study; who will be involved in the study and who will be interested in the results; and when, where, and how the study will be conducted. In terms of conceptualization, this section is often written after the proposal has been completely drafted. In terms of placement, however, it needs to be incorporated toward the beginning of the document, often in the introductory section.

Statement of Intent

A well-crafted intent of the study flows logically from the contextual background and clearly communicates the purpose of the inquiry. A well-honed statement of intent can also signal the mode of inquiry and the audience to whom the study is aimed.

Statement of Intent Versus Statement of Problem

Careful wording of the statement of intent is crucial to a well-conceptualized study. Yet students who are impatient to get on with the dissertation may be frustrated by the intensive deliberations associated with choosing the words and phrasing of the statement of intent. For example, students who have not yet come to grips with qualitative research often talk and write about the Statement of the Problem, a convention of science-based studies. We have abandoned this concept in favor of a Statement of Intent for the study.

This is more than semantic preference if one believes, as we do, that language is a manifestation of the epistemological assumptions that underpin the study. The concept of *problem* implies that something has gone awry and must be fixed or corrected. The implication is that the right or correct way for something to function is already known, that deviations from this standard have been recognized, and that a solution must now be invented or found. In quasi-experimental studies, alternative solutions may have already been identified, and the researcher intends to demonstrate that one alternative is more effective than others.

This rational technical or functional view of stating and then solving problems is not particularly useful in critical or interpretive inquiries. Critical studies may aim to document or reveal systemic inequities that are far more pervasive (and pernicious) than technical or operational problems. Similarly, instead of

demonstrating the efficacy of a particular intervention, interpretive or critical studies may try to problematize a phenomenon to reveal its complexity.

Qualitative studies in education typically do not aim at problem solution. Rather, they aim for deeper understanding—within a particular context—of some perplexing aspect of this complex human enterprise. For the most part, then, qualitative dissertations examine educational phenomena as they occur within somewhat small and circumscribed contexts.[1]

Practice-Focused Dissertations

Over the years, we have worked with many practitioners who are pursuing doctorates not because they want to become full-time researchers or academicians, but rather because they want to better understand the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of their practice. Often, these students are well-regarded teachers or administrators with a highly intuitive sense of what works. Yet they are hard-pressed to articulate the concepts and principles that guide their practice, especially in a way that can be helpful to others. Thus, another intent of qualitative/interpretive studies can be to examine and explicate the nature of one's practice. Paula, for example, has instinctively enacted a narrative pedagogy in art education, almost since the beginning of her career. She knows that what she is doing differs from other traditions of art education, yet she has trouble explaining both the nature of and rationale for these differences. Currently, she is considering the following title and intent for her study:

Title: Entering a Child's World: An Interpretive Study of Narrative Pedagogy in Art Education

Statement of Intent: To explicate the notion of narrative pedagogy in art education

Interestingly, Paula is somewhat reluctant to commit to this focus for her dissertation, expressing concern that she does not fully understand the concept of *narrative pedagogy.* The nature of Paula's reluctance deserves careful consideration. On one hand, it may be a case of commitment jitters, which is not unusual for first-time researchers. On the other hand, she may intuitively sense that the focal point of narrative pedagogy does not quite reflect her true intent. Perhaps she needs to understand narrative pedagogy in order to get at an intent that is more in line with her professional and scholarly interests. Or, it may indicate that she has not grasped the purpose served by the statement of intent—to set the stage for an inquiry through which she can arrive at and articulate her understanding of "narrative pedagogy in art education." Until Paula sorts through the nature of her reluctance, she will have difficulty crossing the threshold between the second and third cycles of deliberation.

Marge, the student who saw herself as Henny Penny (Exemplar 3.3), is crafting a slightly different type of qualitative study around her practice. As a graduate

of and long-time teacher in a Catholic high school for girls, Marge is struggling to enact a feminist pedagogy within a patriarchal system. The struggle is fraught with dilemmas, and Marge's intent is not to "solve" the dilemmas, because dilemmas are, by definition, unresolvable. Rather, she aims to elucidate the nature of the dilemmas so that she can make more conscious/deliberate choices about her teaching practice. Hence, Marge's title is, "Through a Feminist Lens: An Autobiographical Study of Educational Dilemmas," and her preliminary statement of intent is the following:

> In this autobiographical study, I interpret how I came to name myself a feminist and how I narrate my struggle to enact a feminist pedagogy in a Catholic, all-girl high school. Coming to name this school as patriarchal and identifying the dilemmas that arise because of my evolving beliefs and how I am transforming my teaching practice are constructed as an emerging portrayal of what it means to me to be a woman and feminist teaching girls in an urban American high school setting.

This statement will probably undergo several revisions as Marge enters more deeply into her study. As currently worded, it conveys more of a sense of the thinking process that Marge intends to pursue in the study and less of a sense of how her dilemmas link to a broader "So what?" But as an early attempt to articulate what she intends to do, this statement has helped Marge organize her thinking and see the broad outline of her inquiry.

Settling on an Intent Compatible With One's Mode of Inquiry

During the first and second cycles of deliberation, the embryonic images for a study potentially can be shaped in a variety of ways. A crucial facet of deliberation during the third cycle is making decisions about which avenue to pursue. For example, when we met Rhonda, she was early in the first cycle of deliberation. The concept of *service learning at Christian colleges* continually surfaced in her musings about the dissertation, but each conversation seemed to take a slightly different perspective. Eventually, three possible intentions for the dissertation, each grounded in a different qualitative research tradition, began to emerge (see Exemplar 5.3).

As students struggle to clarify the intent of their study, they may initially state it as a question, trying to clarify what it is they really want to know. This is not necessarily a problem, but it does carry a potential danger—persistent lack of clarity about the "So what?" and "Who cares?" of the study. For example, the statement of intent for Melanie's study about women and welfare (Exemplar 5.4) evolved through three iterations as the purpose of her study came more clearly into focus.

EXEMPLAR 5.3 Intent of the Study: Alternative Frames

Authors' Commentary: Rhonda is a highly motivated student with a strong background in quantitative research. Before, during, and after her participation in an introductory course on qualitative research, Rhonda and Maria engaged in e-mail correspondence about her dissertation. Emerging from this discourse were three different ways of framing an intent for her study.

Qualitative/Empirical Intent. To determine the status of teaching for "service to community" among Christian colleges.

Qualitative/Interpretive Intent. To explicate the meanings of "service to community" and "servant leaders" within Christian colleges.

Qualitative/Critical Intent. To critique the mission of Christian colleges to teach for "service to community" and to prepare "servant leaders."

Author's Commentary: Any of these studies is potentially worthwhile, but the wording indicates very different intentions for the study and modes of inquiry. Rhonda repeatedly expressed a desire to do a qualitative study, even though she came from a very strong quantitative orientation. Had she, when presented with these possible statements of intent, gravitated to any one of them, she could have moved into a third cycle of deliberation, digging into the discourses that would allow her to flesh out a qualitative study within a particular tradition. Instead, none of these seemed to grab her, and she continued drafting ideas, such as the following, that are imbued with quantitative language.

Maria, here are the new leanings for my dissertation. Compare 5 CCCU schools with 5 comparable (in size, location, etc.) from the CIC schools. Find out who has service learning and if it is working. If it comes out that the CIC schools do and the CCCU schools don't, I can make recommendations. Final outcome will be Strategic Principles for Implementing a Service Component on your campus. I feel good about it because it gathers a lot of data and does comparisons. Also I don't have to point my fingers at the CCCU schools that don't have service components—rather I can share ideas about how to start one up.

Case Example 5.1, Part 3 illustrates how the concepts in Micheline's title flow into her statement of intent.

Guiding Research Questions

Purpose of Guiding Research Questions

The guiding questions lay out the conceptual structure of the entire inquiry. In other words, they explain how the researcher expects to fulfill the intent of the study. Once the guiding questions come into focus, they also carve out intellec-

EXEMPLAR 5.4 Evolution of a Statement of Intent

First iteration: What are the educational implications of current welfare reform policies?

Second iteration: To explore the educational implications of current welfare reform policy for the impact/influence on women in poverty.

Third iteration: To make the case for education in welfare reform policy.

Authors' Commentary: Notice how the first statement of intent does not offer any insight into the questions "So what?" and "Who cares?" It also does not indicate the inquiry tradition or research genre of the study. The concepts *impact/influence* in the second version suggest a more empirical cause-and-effect study. The third version addresses the "So what?" (i.e., policy formation), the "Who cares?" (i.e., policymakers), and the research genre (i.e., case study). The statement of intent itself does not indicate the research tradition that will guide the case study, but the literary quality of the first half of the dissertation title (Women's Journey Through Poverty: A Case for Education in Welfare Policy) signals an interpretive, rather than empirical, tradition.

In the next iteration, Melanie will need to consider the implications of making a case for education in welfare policy, as stated in the title, or for welfare reform policy, as stated in the intent of the study. It is this attention to nuance that can drive students to distraction during the third cycle of deliberation. "What difference does it make?" they may complain in frustration. Perhaps none; perhaps a great deal. What matters is giving the issue sufficient thought to develop confidence and clarity about what is under study and the nature of the contribution that the researcher intends to make.

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tual workspaces—helping the researcher to recognize areas requiring further deliberation and to organize information related to these areas.

Creating Intellectual Workspace

We have contended from the opening pages of this book that the dissertation is an iterative process with no precise demarcations between cycles of deliberation. We have also argued that entering into the inquiry process provides the insights needed to craft a coherent proposal. Unfortunately, the gray zone between *proposing* and *doing* a study can be disorienting, especially to novice researchers who lack proposal-writing experience. Guiding research questions can help students consolidate what they already know and clarify what remains to be learned. In this sense, they flag intellectual workspaces that allow students to do the following:

- Organize the wealth of information they have been amassing during the second cycle of deliberation

- Recognize areas where additional information/thinking is needed
- Clarify the relationship between various bodies of discourse and specific facets of the study

In working with students over the past 20 years, we have become increasingly convinced of the importance of guiding research questions. However, the significance of these questions often eludes students during their early work on the proposal. Indeed, a great deal of groundwork needs to occur before a solid set of guiding research questions can be formulated. Nevertheless, thinking about guiding questions from the outset is one way to bring the conceptual structure into clearer and clearer focus. To illustrate what we mean, let us return to Lynn Richards's dissertation, one of the four studies cited in Exemplar 4.2. To facilitate reference to this study, Lynn's statement of intent and guiding research questions are restated in Exemplar 5.5 along with an initial list of questions that she generated when she first started to think about her dissertation.

Generally, no more than three to six guiding research questions are needed to structure a study. Usually, long lists of questions indicate that further deliberation on the intent of the study is needed. One of the most common points of confusion that we see is a lack of differentiation between guiding research questions and data-gathering questions. Two rules of thumb can help to distinguish between the two. First, data-gathering questions are typically worded to elicit information from participants in the study or to flag other types of information that the researcher intends to collect. With refinement, such questions could be used to structure interviews or questionnaires. Second, data-gathering questions rarely lead to a conceptual point. In other words, responses to the questions provide the researcher with insight into the experiences or perspectives of individual participants, but they do not, in and of themselves, constitute the conclusions or "So what?" of the study. The questions in Exemplar 5.6 are typical of early efforts to articulate guiding questions and illustrate some clues for distinguishing guiding from data-gathering questions.

Structuring the Inquiry Through Guiding Questions

Grasping the nature and purpose of guiding research questions dramatically increases students' command of their inquiry. Quite simply, guiding questions guide the *inquiry process*, not the *data collection process*. Well-conceptualized guiding questions help to structure the inquiry in several ways. In short, they

- Lay out a progression of thinking that constitutes the totality of the inquiry
- Provide a focal point for thinking through and organizing the research procedures
- Help the researcher to visualize a sequence of chapters for the final dissertation document
- Foreshadow the series of portrayals that constitutes both the process and results of generating knowledge through qualitative research

EXEMPLAR 5.5 Initial Articulation of Questions for a Study on Creative Drama

Title: Pictures in Our Minds: A Narrative Study of the Incorporation of Creative Dramatics as Pedagogy in Elementary Classroom Content Areas

Statement of Intent and Guiding Research Questions: The intent of this research is to delineate creative dramatics as pedagogy. This narrative study also investigates how primary school children's content area learning is shaped by the classroom drama process.

How can creative drama be construed as pedagogy?

What happens when a teacher uses drama as pedagogy in an elementary classroom?

How are the narratives of the classroom interpreted?

What are the pedagogical implications of using creative drama in the elementary classroom?

Initial Set of Questions:

1a. How does creative drama contribute to a cooperative classroom climate? 1b. Do consistent, warm and "nonjudgmental" school experiences impact on self-esteem?

2. Does creative drama help students to connect specific content knowledge to real-world experiences?

3a. Does creative drama promote a young child's awareness of and empathy with others? 3b. Can drama activities expedite "de-centering"?

4. Do creative drama activities/learnings transform into emerging literacy and emergent student writing?

5. Can "gaps" in reader's prior knowledge be instantiated through participation in creative drama activities? Do "active classrooms develop active readers"? (or learners?)

6. How can holistic learning be facilitated by the creative drama process? How does creative drama address Eisner's idea of "broadening educational equity" for all students?

7. What effect does participation in creative drama activities have on oral language development?

8. Does creative drama significantly promote student-to-student interactions as opposed to traditional "teacher asks and one student responds" classroom dialogue?

9. How does the role of the teacher adjust as the structure of drama in the classroom leads from diminished teacher direction to more loosely structured, child-developed activities?

10. How does the leader's ability to ask searching, skillful, and reflective questions contribute to the quality of drama/learning experiences of the children?

11. What are the understandings of the participants involved in the drama experiences? How does the debriefing process make visible the child's perceptions of the teacher's intended plan/objectives of the lesson? What reciprocal learning processes (student to teacher as well as teacher to student) are facilitated?

continued

12. What features of the classroom setting (physical, social, temporal, and spatial) are changed as the children are engaged in creative drama experiences? How are the interactions/behaviors of the participants instigated, sustained, and developed?

13a. Do intermediate-aged school children and primary-aged elementary school children exhibit different patterns of learning in their creative drama participation? 13b. Is drama applicable across age levels in all instructional applications? 13c. Are some content areas more "teachable" for different drama stages and cognitive ages?

14. What are the implications for the elementary classroom practitioner and/or the teacher educator?

Authors' Commentary: The mix of questions in the preceding list suggest a variety of potential avenues for a study. Questions 1b, 3a, and 13a, for example, tend to have a more psychological thrust, looking for cause-and-effect relationships between creative drama as an instructional intervention and self-esteem, empathy, and student learning. Some questions (e.g., 4 and 7) focus more specifically on student acquisition of literacy and oral language skills. Still others (e.g., 1a, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12) are more pedagogically oriented but tend to be framed in terms of cause and effect. When Lynn revised this list a few weeks later, most of the questions remained the same except for a few minor changes in wording. Of significance, however, was the following question that Lynn added to the above list—"What happens when a teacher facilitates creative drama activities in the classroom?" This additional question, when coupled with Question 14 above, eventually led to the central focus of Lynn's study and helped her to recraft the statement of intent and final guiding questions.

Generally, we have found it useful to think in terms of several key guiding questions. Because these questions structure both the proposal and the dissertation, we try to give a sense of how the questions fit into both documents.

What has brought the researcher to the study? This question allows the researcher to introduce the phenomenon under study, provide background information on his or her interest in the phenomenon, and make preliminary connections between this personal interest and the interests of a broader discourse community. This probably sounds much like the information that is included in the introductory section of the proposal, and it is. However, we also flag it as a guiding question, because the researcher will have a much clearer understanding of how to introduce the study once the inquiry has been completed. Students with whom we work often find it necessary to refine the introduction to give greater clarity to the conceptual nuances of the dissertation. Thus, this question ultimately serves as a guide to the researcher's conceptualization and writing of the introductory section of the dissertation. Because of variations in dissertation format, the introduction may be called Chapter 1, or it may have some other title (e.g., foreword, preface).

How have discourses related to the phenomenon under study informed the researcher's thinking? In addressing this question, the researcher places the phenomenon under study within a broader social and theoretical context. By draw-

EXEMPLAR 5.6 Data-Gathering Questions Masquerading as Guiding Research Questions

Intent of the Study: How do students, teachers, and administrators experience the involvement of students in curriculum reform initiatives?

Guiding Research Questions:

1. In what ways were students involved in reforming the curriculum at their school?
2. What roles did students play in relationship to curriculum reform at their school?
3. What were the characteristics of the students involved in curriculum reform activities?
4. How did students, teachers, and administrators view student participation in the school's curriculum reform activities?
5. To what extent did student involvement actually affect curriculum change?
6. What evidence was there of the institutionalization of student involvement in curriculum reform activities?
7. Are there implications for teachers' and administrators' roles when students become involved in curriculum reform? If so, what are those implications?

Authors' Commentary: First note how the use of a question to state the intent of the study leaves unanswered the issues of "So what?" and "Who cares?" Proposal readers might well ask the student, "To what end do you want to know about these experiences?"

Next, notice the varying levels of specificity in the questions. Questions 3 and 5, for example, are very different—the former looking at demographic variables, the latter at cause-and-effect relationships. Such variability in the scope and focus of questions is often an indicator that additional conceptualization of the inquiry is needed.

Also consider whether each "guiding" question above helps to fulfill the intent of the study. Imagine the nature of information that will logically be provided in response to each question. Do these sets of information fit together or, more importantly, build upon one another? Is there a clear progression of thought, or will the questions generate separate clusters of information?

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ing upon formal discourses as a primary source of information, the researcher illuminates the significance of the inquiry and shows that it will make a substantive contribution. In the research proposal, this question must be addressed in sufficient depth to demonstrate that the study is worth doing. But it is highly likely that additional bodies of discourse will be investigated during the course of the inquiry. Sometimes, the researcher is able to flag these in advance. It is just as likely, however, that unexpected yet relevant discourses will surface during the inquiry process. This is the reason that we caution students against thinking of a singular review of literature that is completed before the dissertation. This guiding question helps to organize the researcher's thinking and writing about what is traditionally seen as the second chapter of the dissertation.

How will the phenomenon under study be captured, and how will it be portrayed in the dissertation? This guiding question sets the stage for addressing a host of procedural issues. In what context will the phenomenon be studied, and why is this an appropriate and productive context? What information will be gathered to get at the essence of the phenomenon, the context, and the interplay between the two? How will the information be gathered, recorded, and managed? What will be done with the information; for example, will it be analyzed in a fairly empirical way or interpreted? How will the information be used to represent the phenomenon as it has manifested itself in the context of the study?

It is crucial for novice researchers to keep in mind that responses to these questions in the proposal are at best approximations. As they live with the study (see Chapters 7 and 8), it is likely that procedures will be modified as the inquiry evolves. Even when no radical changes occur, researchers have a far better understanding of the inquiry process after engaging in the study. Consequently, the description of how the phenomenon has been captured will be far more precise in the dissertation. Often, but not always, the process for capturing the phenomenon is described in the third chapter of the dissertation.

The issue of how the phenomenon will be portrayed can be only an educated guess in the proposal. The researcher knows that space must be allocated in the dissertation for this extremely important portrayal. Yet the form and content of the portrayal emerges from the inquiry. Often, the fourth chapter of the dissertation contains this portrayal. But when the phenomenon is extremely complex or multifaceted, several chapters may be necessary. We have also seen students include extensive appendixes to supplement or augment this portrayal.

How will meanings be derived from the portrayal of the phenomenon, and how will these meanings be represented in the dissertation? This question is addressed by describing procedures that will be used to analyze or interpret the portrayal of the phenomenon under study. To develop these procedures, researchers draw upon the "rules" for generating legitimate knowledge within a given research genre. For example, grounded theory is a research genre with clearly established procedures for analyzing data and generating theory. Studies based in a narrative, ethnographic, case study or heuristic genre would use different procedures.

In the proposal, researchers draw upon discourses related to the genre of the study to describe how they envision making meaning from their data. Sometimes, preliminary speculations are included as examples of the type of results that might be generated. Again, this is all very tentative in the proposal stage. Coming to grips with how to make meaning from qualitative data is *the* major issue during the cycle of deliberation that we characterize as *living with the study.* We return to this issue in Chapters 7 and 8.

As researchers analyze or interpret their data, they must also conceptualize a form for representing the results in the dissertation document. This is probably the most nebulous aspect of the study to explain in the proposal.

What are the implications of the inquiry, and how do these implications relate to the original statement of intent for the study? Here the proposal comes full cycle, explaining the nature of the contribution that the researcher intends to

make as a result of the study. Obviously, the specific results of the study cannot be described before the fact. But it is helpful for researchers to think through the nature of the contribution (e.g., policy recommendations, guidelines for practice, heuristic models). This issue is also a focus of Chapters 7 and 8.

To gain a sense of how guiding questions can structure an inquiry, we direct the readers' attention to Micheline's proposal (Case Example 5.1, Part 4).

Review of Relevant Discourses

As discussed in Chapter 3, the second cycle of deliberation entails immersion in discourses related to both the subject and the mode of the inquiry. The task during the third cycle is to draw from this wealth of background material the information needed to craft the study.

Review of Discourses Versus Review of Literature

First, let us address the question, "Why do we use the phrase 'review of discourses' rather than 'review of literature'?" As discussed in Chapter 3, academic/scholarly literature is only one form of discourse that is likely to be occurring about important educational issues. Discourses may also be occurring among various stakeholder groups (e.g., practitioners, consumers, policymakers) and in the media. In crafting a proposal, it is often important to represent these multiple streams of discourse rather than focus only on the formal/theoretical literature. This is one reason that we find the concept of *reviewing discourses* to be more useful than *reviewing literature*.

We also prefer *reviewing discourses* to counteract the dysfunctional notion of *the* review of *the* literature. Too often, students seem to think in terms of a monolithic body of literature that is presented in one chapter of the proposal and subsequently transferred *in toto* to the dissertation. Reinforcing this view seems to be an assumption that the review of literature is a precursor to, rather than an integral part of, the study. We hope that the discussion of guiding research questions illustrated how in qualitative studies, various bodies of discourse are woven throughout the proposal and dissertation. A key question to keep in mind during this third cycle of deliberation is, "In what ways do the formal and informal discourses serve my inquiry?" To further organize one's thinking, it is useful to ask, "What discourses do I use in relation to each guiding question?"

Most important, however, in the academic sense, *discourse* has come to represent a theoretic concept regarding the language exchanges within a topic or a field of study (see Think Piece #1).

Situating the Study in Relevant Discourses

One vital purpose served by reviewing discourses is setting the context for the study. This purpose is most closely akin to the typical notion of the review of literature because it focuses on discourses related to the subject of the inquiry. A

Problematizing Educational Inclusion: A Practice-Based Heuristic Inquiry

Intent: To problematize the concept of educational inclusion for the purpose of informing educational policy and administrative practice.

	Dissertation Chapter/Phase of Heuristic Inquiry	*Guiding Questions*	*Description of Heuristic Phase*	*Processes/ Products*	*Dissertation Chapter Content*
Chapter 1	Initial Engagement: Unrest In Practice	What is the nature of my initial engagement with the concept of educational inclusion?	During this period of initial engagement I see the challenge of the researcher/practitioner as to identify within practice an intense interest, a concern that calls out, begging for attention—one that holds important social meanings and compelling personal as well as professional implications.	*Reflection, Dialogue, Indwelling Deliberation, Plans, & Decisions.* Identification of topic; definition of terms; articulation of purpose, intent, rationale, and approach.	In Chapter 1 of my dissertation document I will portray my initial engagement with this study.
Chapter 2	Initial Engagement: Research Plan	What processes can I use to accomplish the intent of my study?	"At this time the investigator reaches inward for tacit awareness and knowledge, permits intuition to run freely, and elucidates the context from which the question takes form and significance" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 27).	*Planning , Decision Making.* Detailed description of the heuristic inquiry process and articulation of its use to develop my anticipated procedures for this study.	In Chapter 2 of my dissertation document I will describe heuristic inquiry and the processes/ procedures of this study.
Chapter 3	Immersion/ Acquisition: Meeting Other Realities	How do I move from initial engagement to immersion/ acquisition through the discourses related to educational inclusion found in selected literature?	During phases of immersion, I view the researcher/ practitioner as adopting a stance of openness. He/she enters fully into life with others wherever the research topic theme is being expressed or talked about, i.e., in public settings, in social contexts, in professional gatherings. The heuristic inquirer is alert to all possibilities for meaning and is guided by tacit understandings to literature, to other people, to institutions, to nature, and to unanticipated places near and far. I see the immersion/acquisition of my inquiry as a time to gather information related to educational inclusion from practice and literature and then to create Texts from different perspectives revealed in the discourses of various participants.	*Immersion/Acquisition Through Literature & Practice.* Log of literature and practice encounters. • Natural • Deliberate • Contrived Observations, meetings, dialogue with self and others, videos, training materials, curricular materials, staff development sessions.	In Chapter 3 of my dissertation document I will discuss my immersion through selected literature and practice related to educational inclusion.

Chapter 4	Immersion/ Acquisition: Learning Other Realities	How do I move from immersion within the literature to immersion through the discourse of my administrative practice?	"Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion, for staying with, and for maintaining a sustained focus and concentration" (Douglass and Moustakas, 1985, p. 45).	*Immersion/Acquisition.* Creating acquisitions from immersion through "storying of conversations."	In Chapter 4 of my dissertation I will present and discuss my acquisitions in the form of "storied conversations."
Chapter 5	Realization: Making Meaning	How do I portray the problematic nature of educational inclusion that I have come to "realize" through the processes of immersion and acquisition?	At some unspecified point, the heuristic researcher will resist the urge to rely upon methods and will, while considering the intent of the study and the intended audience, resonate off of the pieces and draw upon processes of imagination. In so doing, he/she will gain a clear sense of the issues in what Garman refers to as a "leap of insight" resulting in what is commonly described as an "Aha!" or, to use a word related to heuristic, a "Eureka!" Eisner (1991) maintains that in qualitative studies "the self is the instrument" that engages the situation and makes sense of it. He suggests that it is this ability to see and interpret significant aspects that provides unique, personal insight into the experience under study. "At some unspecified point the heuristic researcher will have gained a clear sense of the direction in which the theme or question is moving and will know (tacitly) what is required to illuminate it" (Douglass and Moustakas, 1985, p. 48).	*Incubation, Deliberation, Illumination, Interpretation, Problematizing, Explication; Deliberation.* Portrayal of problematized aspects of educational inclusion.	In Chapter 5 of my dissertation I will present a narrative portrayal of my interpretations.

Figure 5.1. Structural Overview of Dissertation *(continued)*

	Dissertation Chapter/Phase of Heuristic Inquiry	*Guiding Questions*	*Description of Heuristic Phase*	*Processes/ Products*	*Dissertation Chapter Content*
Chapter 6	Creative Synthesis: Generating New Realities	What heuristic can be "creatively synthesized" to inform educational policy and administrative practice regarding educational inclusion?	Through processes of imagination, intuition, self-reflection, and the tacit dimension, the educational inquirer will represent a synthesis of understandings. The heuristic portrayal can take any number of forms and is meant to capture the essence of the understandings of the concept under study that has been gained through the inquiry process. With the creation of this heuristic representation, the educational researcher/practitioner culminates the research process by fulfilling what Eisner articulates as an obligation of the educational researcher to be educative in a public way. "In synthesis the searcher is challenged to generate a new reality, a new monolithic significance that embodies the essence of the heuristic truth" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 52).	The creation of a heuristic representation that problematizes the concept of educational inclusion that can be used by an educational administrator/ practitioner/leader to: • Evoke reflection • Invite substantive conversation • Engender an appreciation for the complexities involved as attempts are made to transform this value into practice	In Chapter 6 of my dissertation document I will present my heuristic representation problematizing the concept of educational inclusion.
Chapter 7	"Resting" in Practice	What are the implications of my study?	Rowan (1981), in his discussion of a cycle of research that characterizes what he calls "alternative research paradigms," describes a period of contentment that begins and ends each new research cycle. Rowan refers to this time as "resting in his own experience" (p. 98).	*Reflection.* Discussion of implications.	In the final chapter of my dissertation document I will discuss the implications of my study.

130

131

Figure 5.1. Continued

starting point for this review are the key concepts in the title of the dissertation. For example, the title of Lynn Richards's study (Exemplars 4.4 and 5.5) includes the concepts *creative dramatics as pedagogy* and *elementary classroom content areas*. The second chapter of her dissertation is titled, "Drama Definitions, A Selected Review of the Literature," and is organized into four major sections—definitions of drama in education, drama as subject and as process, types of educational drama, and classroom drama situated in educational context. In these sections, Lynn draws upon formal literature first to explain various conceptions of and terminology for drama and then to link creative dramatics to pedagogy, elementary curriculum, and classroom practice. By the end of Lynn's second chapter, a reader with no prior knowledge of creative dramatics will have gained an orientation to this discourse as well as an understanding of the importance of the study.

Melanie, who is studying education and welfare reform (Exemplars 5.2 and 5.4), draws heavily upon discourses in the media (e.g., television, newspapers, and magazines) to show how welfare mothers are being characterized in our society. She is also using federal statutes, the Congressional Record, and rules and regulations to describe official public policy on the relationship between education and welfare.

Kathy Ceroni's dissertation (Exemplar 4.6) offers another example of how various discourses can serve a study. In Chapter 1, Kathy draws from formal literature about teachers as a resource for school reform. In Chapter 2, she uses formal literature to trace the evolution of various incentive plans aimed at encouraging teachers to assume leadership roles. Chapter 3 captures and conveys a very different type of discourse. Using a variety of official and "fugitive" documents, Kathy portrays the enactment of the Lead Teacher Initiative in Pennsylvania.

We hope that these three brief examples illustrate several important points. First, discourses about the subject of one's study can be found in a variety of places, including academic/scholarly literature (e.g., books, journals, research reports); mass media; legal and regulatory documents; and a host of contextual artifacts. An elaboration of the latter category is probably in order. When students aim to study a "hot" topic or issue, the most current and volatile discourse is likely to be evident in a variety of artifacts that are neither neatly indexed nor formally housed in university libraries. The term *fugitive documents* has been used to characterize source materials such as policy documents, action plans, administrative/project reports, correspondence, minutes of meetings, position papers, and resolutions that are often housed in organizational or personal files.

Second, not all discourse is presented in one chapter. Rather, it is used selectively throughout the proposal and dissertation to support various aspects of a study. This is what we mean by the review of discourses being integral to the inquiry. How students choose to present/use the discourses can make as important a scholarly contribution as the results of the inquiry. Related to this second point is a third. Reviewing discourses related to the key concepts in the title of the study should provide even the most uninformed reader with a conceptual context for understanding the "What" and "So what?" of the inquiry. Sometimes, students do not realize that their immersion in the discourses has made them far more conversant in the topic of their study than most readers (including

committee members). The challenge is finding a way to translate this wealth of information into a coherent picture that brings less knowledgeable readers up to speed. To do this effectively requires considerable deliberation and even some creativity. Of crucial importance is conceptualizing an organizing principle that puts the discourses into some meaningful perspective.

Organizing the Review of Discourses

Perhaps the greatest impediment to crafting a meaningful and informative review of discourses is the dysfunctional notion that one is supposed to summarize the ideas of others and then to pass judgment on them—indicating whose ideas are right or wrong or with whom one agrees or disagrees. Far more useful are a variety of potential strategies for organizing a review of discourses, including the following:

- Tracing the historical evolution of relevant discourses; showing the historical flow or development of key ideas (this is more than a simple chronological summary of who wrote what when)
- Tracing conceptual threads (e.g., themes and subthemes, issues, or questions) within a discourse
- Mapping various schools of thought or ideological positions related to the topic being reviewed[2]
- Mapping disciplinary perspectives of a topic
- Mapping the positions of various stakeholder groups, such as practitioners, academics, scholars, policymakers, and consumers

These organizing principles are not mutually exclusive. For example, Brent, a student studying attention deficit disorder, traced the historical evolution of the discourse by comparing and contrasting medical, psychological, sociological, educational, political, and economic perspectives on this syndrome. Micheline, in reviewing discourses on educational inclusion, not only laid out different ideological positions but related them to various stakeholder groups.

Decisions Involved in Reviewing Discourses

Custom crafting a proposal entails coming to grips with the discourses relevant to the topic and intent of one's inquiry. This complex cognitive task involves making careful decisions about the following:

- What to include and exclude
- What organizing principle(s) can be used to make the discourses comprehensible to less informed readers
- How discourses can be used to frame the "What," "So what?" and "Who cares?" of the study

Custom crafting a proposal also entails drawing upon discourses relevant to the mode of inquiry. We address this issue in the next section on research procedures.

Research Procedures

This section of the proposal accomplishes a twofold purpose. First, it provides an explanation of and rationale for the research genre that is guiding the study. Second, it provides a careful explanation of the procedures that will be followed to address each guiding research question. When well conceptualized, these two facets of the proposal lay out the logic of justification for the inquiry.

Research Procedures as Logic of Justification

Traditional dissertations typically include a section titled Research Methodology or Research Methods. We prefer Research Procedures for two reasons. First, *methodology* literally means the study of methods and is, therefore, a misnomer for descriptions of research procedures. Second, *method* is often equated with technique, an equation that, in our experience with qualitative inquiry, is not useful. The following comment by Smith and Heshusius (1986) offers an important distinction between method as technique and method as logic of justification:

> Method can be characterized in at least two ways. The most commonly encountered meaning is *method as procedures or techniques* [emphasis added]. In this case the term invokes the kinds of "how-to-do-it" discussions long found in introductory textbooks on quantitative inquiry and, more recently, in a number of basic textbooks on qualitative inquiry. . . . The second characterization of *method is as "logic of justification"* [emphasis added]. . . . The focus here is not on techniques but on the elaboration of logical issues and, ultimately, on the justifications that inform practice. . . . This conceptualization involves such basic questions as, What is the nature of social and educational reality? What is the relationship of the investigator to what is investigated? and How is truth to be defined? (p. 8)

Our sports analogy in Chapter 4 was intended to give a felt sense of the distinction that Smith and Heshusius are making. Crafting research procedures cannot be done in an epistemological vacuum. Students must understand the research ball game in which they are playing and the rules of the game. Developing the logic of justification for a study is akin to a coach not merely describing what the game plan will be, but explaining the thinking behind the plan. The logic of justification is the student's rationale for how the results or truth claims (see Think Piece #3) of the inquiry will be generated and supported.

Too often, when students equate method with technique, they give inordinate attention to the nuts and bolts of gathering data but virtually no consideration to how they will draw meaning from the data. This creates an illusion of

efficiency as they expediently enter into the study. "Getting out" of the study, however, can become problematic as students flounder to make sense of the data. When guiding research questions are used to structure a study and procedures are laid out for each guiding question, students gain a clearer understanding of how they will proceed from start to finish.

Rationale for the Research Genre

During the second cycle of deliberation, immersion in discourses about research tradition and research genre can surface tacit assumptions about knowledge and ways of knowing. As students are drawn to particular modes of inquiry, they begin to acquire a language for discussing not only the topic of their study but also the mode of inquiry. This is an important step forward. However, the level of understanding gained through reading and talking is only preliminary to the depth of understanding gained by writing about one's study. In our experience, learning intensifies during the third cycle as students actually write the rationale for their research procedures. Through writing, they gain a better command of language appropriate for the study and, in turn, a greater sense of control over the inquiry.

If carefully crafted, the title of the study offers a useful starting point for writing the research rationale. From our perspective, it is useful to indicate the research genre in the title of the study. Drawing from relevant discourses, students can elaborate on their understanding of the genre and why it is appropriate for their inquiry. For example, a case study might be empirical, interpretive, or critical. Furthermore, it might be a case *of* something or a case *for* something. Similarly, a narrative study might be further refined as a personal, autobiographical, or literary narrative. Thus, it is not enough for students to say, "This is a case study," or "I'm doing a narrative study." An elaboration and qualification of these terms provides an epistemological context for understanding the logic behind specific procedures. This, in turn, places the study within an inquiry tradition and lays a foundation for supporting the results of the study.

Procedures for Each Guiding Research Question

Recalling our sports analogy, the research rationale explains in what ballpark the student is planting his or her feet and the ball game that is being played. The remainder of the procedures section in the proposal lays out the strategies for "playing the game." Well-crafted guiding research questions provide a conceptual structure or skeleton for the inquiry. The procedures flesh out the details of the inquiry process.

The procedures presented for each guiding question should address several key points:

- What information will be used to address the question
- How this information will be gathered and from what sources

- How the information will be analyzed or interpreted
- How the information will be presented or represented in order to make its contribution to the inquiry clear

Well-conceived procedures typically require intricate and extensive discussions that cannot be excerpted easily from a proposal or dissertation. However, to give a sense of how these issues are addressed, we return to the four studies introduced in Exemplar 4.2. (Readers are encouraged to review Exemplars 4.3 through 4.6 for additional information about each study.)

In Pat McMahon's dissertation (*A Narrative Study of Three Levels of Reflection in a College Composition Class: Teacher Journal, Student Portfolios, Teacher-Student Discourse*), three educational phenomena are under study—teacher reflection, student reflection, and teacher-student discourse. The challenge facing Pat was how to create a stable record of these three complex, dynamic, and elusive phenomena. To explicate the concept of teacher reflection, Pat proposed to examine her own pedagogical practice. Thus, her first guiding question was, "What is the story of the educational encounter in a community college composition class?" In keeping with the genre of personal narrative, the stable record or account of her classroom practice took the form of a story. The major source of information from which the story was created was the detailed professional journal that Pat kept throughout one semester of teaching. Drawing from literature on reflection, teacher reflection, journaling, story, and storying, Pat explained not only how she would maintain the journal and create the story, but also why this procedure would constitute legitimate knowledge. In keeping with the interpretive inquiry tradition, objective verification of the accuracy of Pat's account of classroom events was not an issue. Her obligation was to create a systematic, authentic account of her reflections and then to craft a rich, coherent story that portrayed a semester-long encounter with her composition students.

A second intent of Pat's study is to "explicate the concept of reflection in writing portfolios." Thus, another guiding question was, "What is the nature of reflective writing as exhibited in the portfolios of students?" Pat's procedure for addressing this guiding question was to have each composition student create and submit a writing portfolio. She crafted the logic of justification for this procedure by linking discourses on reflection with discourses on composition theory, portfolios in general, and writing portfolios in particular. The source of information for this facet of the inquiry was 65 student portfolios. Interestingly, this guiding question did not indicate what form/format Pat would use to present these portfolios in the dissertation. Obviously, 65 writing portfolios could not be reprinted in the dissertation, but during the third cycle of deliberation, when Pat was conceptualizing the proposal, it was difficult to imagine how this issue would be addressed. However, by carefully creating a rationale for a narrative study, Pat laid the foundation for the composite portrayals she eventually created to depict four different forms of student reflection.

To capture the discourse between herself and her students, Pat kept copies of her notes to students about their writing. Eventually, this information was

woven into the story of her educational encounter and into the portrayals of student reflection. We hope that this brief discussion underscores the importance of crafting procedures for each guiding question.

For us, Pat's study represents an interesting and pivotal point in the evolution of qualitative dissertations within our study group. Prior to her work, dissertations of group members had become increasingly interpretive, and many were, in essence, personal narratives, but we had not thought to explicitly name this a dissertation genre. With her background in English literature and her practice as a composition teacher, Pat was the first study group member to draw upon the discourses about narrative that had been growing among educational researchers. Looking back from her study, we now recognize that prior dissertations had been fairly conservative, still attending to epistemological issues embedded in the empirical tradition. Pat moved us into a new ballpark, a change that we did not fully comprehend until 2 years later, when Kathy Ceroni defended her study (*Promises Made, Promises Broken: A Literary Criticism of the Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Experience*).

In retrospect, we came to realize that Pat had worked intuitively within a highly interpretive tradition and had implicitly built her logic of justification by tacitly drawing upon her literary background. Her study moved us closer to a language for explaining this type of research, but it was Kathy who made the language—and the rationale—explicit. In all honesty, Kathy did not deliberately start out with this as her intent. Rather, she came to it gradually—and painfully—as she crafted successive iterations of her study. (Indeed, it was watching the latent image emerge through these successive drafts of Kathy's study that brought home to us the iterative nature of the dissertation process.) Giving a reconstructed account of Kathy's dissertation creates the impression of more intentional planning than was actually the case. To counteract the impression of a neatly conceptualized study, we recount the point at which a warning bell went off.

As part of her efforts to capture the lead teacher experience, Kathy interviewed more than 20 teachers, some of whom served in a lead teacher capacity and some of whom worked with lead teachers. Just as Pat had faced the issue of presenting 65 portfolios in her dissertation, Kathy struggled with how to present 20+ interviews. One crucial decision point came with the realization that it would not be feasible to include verbatim transcripts of all the interviews. As Kathy reflected further, she was drawn to the stories of eight teachers. Although she used all of the interviews to inform her thinking, it was these eight stories that Kathy chose to present in the dissertation. After drafting the first interview, Kathy shared it with us. Maria's immediate reaction was, "Good grief! She can't use these interviews. There's no semblance of objectivity or neutrality. She's put words in the teachers' mouths. She's finished sentences for them. She's shared her own biases and experiences. This isn't legitimate interviewing."

Following this mental outburst was a second, more tentative reaction. "Wait a minute. At the beginning of this chapter, she explained how she was going to present these interviews and why she was doing it that way. It made sense when I read it. She made a case for doing the interviews this way. Maybe I've got too narrow a view of interviewing. Maybe she's working from a different set of

assumptions." Indeed, as we shared this response with Kathy and she elaborated on her rationale for the interviews, she came eventually to the concept of *inner views storied.* Drawing from discourses on dialectic, dialectical knowing, narrative, and story, Kathy built a logic of justification for this concept. In the end, these interviews represented Kathy's mode for drawing out and examining her own tacitly held views of the lead teacher initiative, professionalism, power, and trust between teachers and school administrators.

This became a major point of contention during the dissertation defense, when one committee member asked in so many words, "If it is your intention to examine the lead teacher experience, how can you claim that these 'inner views storied' accurately capture what is really happening with the initiative?" It is impossible to do justice to this question within the space limitations of this chapter. The question, however, strikes at the heart of the issue of what is under study. In Kathy's study, the answer is multilayered. On the surface, the study is about the lead teacher initiative. Beneath that, however, the lead teacher initiative serves as a symbol of the never-ending parade of reform initiatives that tout empowerment and professionalism for teachers. In this regard, the lead teacher initiative serves as a symbolic representation of Kathy's sense of professionalism and power (or, more to the point, powerlessness) in her role as committed teacher. Thus, Kathy herself becomes a symbol of other teachers who are asked to believe in and support various reform initiatives. Had Kathy embedded her study within an empirical tradition, the results she generated would not have been warranted by her inquiry process. By framing the inquiry within the genre of literary criticism, Kathy carefully created a logic of justification that warrants the study and the meanings she generates.

In retrospect, we see Kathy's study as a coming-of-age literary narrative. The guiding research questions speak of texts, surface and embedded themes, appearance, and reality dualism. The same committee member who challenged the inner views storied as an accurate portrayal of the lead teacher initiative also challenged the nature of these questions. "They talk about the process of the inquiry," he contended, "more than they indicate how each piece contributes to the conceptual 'So what?' of the inquiry." His critique raises a good point, and one that we continue to ponder in our work with students. Yet the fidelity with which Kathy adhered to literary principles throughout her study and the clarity of her rationale for each facet of the inquiry created an intellectually rigorous and defensible dissertation. The integrity of Kathy's inquiry and the questions raised by her committee contributed to the discourse within our dissertation study group in a way that allowed Lynn Richards and Jean Konzal to face more directly the potential power and pitfalls of doing what has come to be called *arts-based research.*

To create the intellectual workspace for capturing her classroom practice, Lynn Richards included the guiding question, "What happens when a teacher uses drama as pedagogy in an elementary classroom?" The "stuff" used to capture the events of the classroom included Lynn's reflective journal, which incorporated her lesson plans and comments about the plans; videotapes of creative drama activities in the classroom; and audiotapes of student reactions to creative drama.

As Lynn's title (*Pictures in Our Minds: A Narrative Study of the Incorporation of Creative Dramatics as Pedagogy in Elementary Classroom Content Areas*) indicates, she is working in a narrative genre. Therefore, a major procedural and conceptual challenge was transforming almost a school year's worth of multi-media stuff into a coherent narrative. Because so many of the creative drama activities were visual, an added challenge was creating vivid visual images with words. The first half of Lynn's title, *Pictures in Our Minds*, alludes to the visual quality not only in the dissertation, but also in the nature of learning engendered by creative drama. This phrase came from one of Lynn's students as he tried to explain why he liked creative drama activities. It did not appear in the title of her proposal but was added to the dissertation to convey an essential aspect of the knowledge generated through the inquiry.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jean Konzal did not initially conceive of her study as an arts-based inquiry (Exemplar 4.5, Our *Changing* Town, Our *Changing* School: Is Common Ground Possible?). Rather, she came to this idea gradually as she struggled with two fundamental issues—the "What" and "So what?" of her study. As indicated in the intent of her study, Jean set out "to uncover the complexities of today's reform efforts in secondary schools—especially as they relate to the relationships among parents and between parents and educators engaged in reform efforts." Having amassed approximately 1,000 pages of interview transcripts, plus artifacts of a community's school reform efforts, Jean faced the challenge of creating a picture of this complex and dynamic educational phenomenon. In terms of the "So what?" of her study, Jean came to believe that dialogue among parents and between parents and educators is crucial yet extremely difficult. She wanted to present the implications of her study in a way that could help others generate such dialogue. These concerns led her to the notion of readers theater, a fundamental reexamination of her epistemological assumptions, and a substantive reformulation of her guiding questions.

We mention these issues in relation to crafting a proposal because they illustrate the iterative nature of the process. Jean's proposal conveyed her thinking about parent involvement in school reform as she understood it at the outset of her study. Once she immersed herself in the phenomenon of school reform, she came to new and deeper understandings. At that juncture, she faced a pivotal decision in the inquiry. Should she adhere to her original conceptualization, or should she fine-tune her conceptualization now that the latent image in the dissertation puddle had finally come into focus?

At the heart of this decision were several dilemmas: (a) Did the rigor and legitimacy of her study lie in adhering to the original proposal or in following the line of thinking generated from the data? (b) Did *fidelity* to the inquiry lie in systematically accounting for all of the data or in an artistic rendering of a text? (c) Did the authenticity of the study lie in the verbatim statements of individual study participants or in the passionate spirit communicated by the collective voices that informed Jean's thinking? Such questions cannot be taken lightly, and Jean's integrity as a researcher came through as she engaged in deliberative discourses with us, with the chair of her committee, and with those more knowledgeable about readers theater.

Recapping Procedural Issues

We hope that the preceding discussion helps to offset some of the most dysfunctional, taken-for-granted assumptions about dissertation research—that is, that only one type of data is needed, that the data will come from only one source, that all data must be uniform, and that a singular method for collecting data is used. Also worth repeating is the point that crafting customized procedures for each guiding research question is the means through which the researcher builds the logic of justification.

Anticipated Portrayals and Tentative Outline of Dissertation Chapters

The overall structure of the dissertation is likely to emerge as students think through the relationships among the intent of the study, each guiding question, and the research procedures. This section of the proposal describes how the student envisions laying out the dissertation document. Often, it is fairly short, listing the title and purpose of each chapter. Although these points may have been addressed in earlier sections of the proposal, summarizing them in one place brings into sharper focus the form and format of the research report.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the dissertation as "science report" is only one format for portraying an inquiry. Accounts of qualitative inquiries, particularly those grounded in interpretive or critical traditions, might be portrayed more effectively as a scholarly book.

Students often worry that departures from the traditional science report format will not be accepted by their school. This is an important consideration and needs to be checked out with one's advisor. It is our contention, however, that the form/format of the dissertation document must be epistemologically congruent with the nature of the inquiry being described. When a sound logic of justification for the inquiry has been developed, and when students engage in deliberative discourse with their advisor and other committee members, support for alternative dissertation formats may be garnered.

Chapter Summary

Again with the caution that there is no hard-and-fast formula for crafting a proposal, we offer the following summary of major considerations discussed throughout this chapter.

A well-crafted title conveys the essence of what is under study and the mode of inquiry.

The process of framing a study begins in the introduction and often includes a personal context that led the student to the study.

A well-crafted statement of intent elaborates on what is under study and communicates a sense of the "So what?" and "Who cares?" of the inquiry.

Three to six well-crafted guiding research questions lay out the conceptual structure of the study, showing the sequence of thinking that will comprise the inquiry.

The review of discourses continues the process of framing the study by showing how the inquiry fits within the context of broader public discourses (e.g., scholarly, professional, disciplinary, popular, policy discourses).

A well-crafted review of discourses provides a well-reasoned rationale for what is under study and the mode of inquiry.

Well-crafted procedures create the logic of justification for the study, explaining how each guiding research question will be addressed.

Detailed explanations of specific techniques are only meaningful insofar as they are related to overall strategies that will fulfill the intent of the inquiry.

Multiple sources and types of information are likely to be used to warrant different aspects of the study.

Procedural information is summarized in a section called The Study, which may be written fairly late in the third cycle of deliberation but is placed early in the proposal.

When adequate attention has been given to research tradition and genre as well as to guiding research questions, it is possible to offer a reasonable description of the format and organization of the dissertation, including the nature of portrayals to be generated.

The proposal is a key draft in the iterative process. It consolidates the student's deliberations and provides a focal point for public discourse, thus initiating the next cycle of deliberation.

Note

1. For an excellent discussion of the issue of contextualized research in education, see Labaree (1998).

2. For a more detailed explanation of procedures for mapping discourses, readers are referred to the work of Paulston and Liebman (1994).

CASE EXAMPLE 5.1 Sections of a Proposal

Part 1—Dissertation Title: Problematizing Educational Inclusion: A Practice-Based Heuristic Inquiry

Authors' Commentary: Notice how this title contains key concepts that describe Micheline's study. "Educational inclusion" flags what is under study. "Practice-based heuristic inquiry" indicates the research genre. "Problematizing" signals the intended outcomes of the study (i.e., to lay out the complexities inherent in an educational phenomenon that is often discussed in overly simplistic and functional ways). When "problematizing" and "heuristic" are considered together, they foreshadow the nature of the portrayal that Micheline aims to generate: a heuristic representation of the problematic aspects of educational inclusion.

As Micheline crafted this title, she debated for some time about using the term *practice-based* to qualify "heuristic inquiry." As she reviewed the discourses on heuristic inquiry, she was uncomfortable with the intensively introspective and psychological nature of many dissertations that fell within this genre. This was not the embryonic image lurking in the shadows of her dissertation "puddle." Yet she was hesitant to modify the notion of heuristic inquiry, saying, "Who am I to reframe the nature of this genre?" In the end, two perspectives persuaded her to take this step. One was our reminder that as a researcher, she has a right to add her perspective to the discourses on heuristic inquiry. The other was her own growing conviction that her title should explicitly indicate the practice-oriented nature of her study. In the body of her proposal, Micheline explains her view of the relationship between "practice-based" and "heuristic inquiry."

Part 2—Introduction: [The following excerpt is taken from the first section of Chapter 1 of Micheline's proposal titled "Background."]

One of the most traumatic events of my professional career was the "failing" of one of my young second-grade students in my first year of teaching. I never realized how pivotal this event was until more than twenty-five years later when I wrote a narrative called *For Timmy*.

Thus I discovered that my professional path and studies in the field of education have been largely guided by my experiences within the profession as an elementary school teacher. When I reflect upon what brings me to this study of educational inclusion, I find that I must travel back to this beginning point. For in recalling my first year of teaching, I realize that from the start I became challenged by the group of students that was resistant to the typical traditional instructional practices and structures of our educational system.

Through the years I came to think of these students who fail within the system, as those whom the *system* fails, and to view the various labels created to classify "their" dysfunction as social constructions of questionable educational relevance. My interest in gaining an understanding of how our educational system might better serve the needs of this group of "unsuccessful" students has led me to seek and to advocate for alternative pedagogical approaches and policies throughout my professional lifetime. And so, it is all the more puzzling to me that when the educational movement swept into my professional world I was taken totally off guard, not by the addition of yet another reform initiative, but rather by my reaction to it. As a woman who personally

continued

stands to benefit from inclusion as a societal value and as a professional who considers herself to be an advocate for students, I was confused by my own immediate ambivalence to the movement, my concern about what it might mean for students, and my fear of the strong political rhetoric that characterized its onset.

Authors' Commentary: In the interest of brevity, we have not reproduced Micheline's story *For Timmy*, which appears in the proposal immediately after the first paragraph reprinted above. This story, however, was included in virtually every draft of every document that Micheline produced as she worked her way toward the proposal. Eventually, she became as bored with reading it as we were. Yet in the proposal, the story fits well and serves several purposes—it anchors the dissertation in Micheline's development as a professional, conveys a sense of her educational philosophy, signals the interpretive nature of her inquiry, and foreshadows a fundamental modality of reflective deliberation through which Micheline makes meaning of experience.

Notice the verbal and conceptual economy with which Micheline frames the study. In two relatively short paragraphs, she places the current inquiry within a personal context that spans 25 years of professional growth and intellectual development. She conveys not only her initial biases, but also how these preconceptions were shaken—moving her to a more deliberative stance toward the dissertation. Also woven into this background are information about her professional roles and her perspective on regular and special education.

From this personal opening, Micheline then provides a more formal frame for the study by linking her concerns to three discourses. Within the background section of Chapter 1, she includes three subsections titled:

Special Education: Introductory Perspectives

Educational Inclusion: Introductory Perspectives

A World Divided: Perspectives of an Educational Administrator

Part 3—Statement of Intent: The intent of my study is to "problematize" the concept of educational inclusion for the purpose of informing educational policy and administrative practice.

Authors' Commentary: Notice how the concepts of problematizing and educational inclusion are carried forward from the title into the intent. The consistency of language and wording begin to create a sense of conceptual coherence. When students vary the wording in the title and intent, sometimes it seems inadvertent, as though little thought has been given to the relationship between these two facets of the study. In other cases, the variations seem more deliberate—an attempt to make the writing interesting by changing words or sentence structure. We encourage students to be more straightforward, echoing key concepts from the title in the statement of intent.

Also notice the way in which the purpose or "So what?" of the study is made explicit. Embedded in the purpose are the prospective audiences for the study as well—educational policymakers and administrators. In retrospect, it might have been useful for Micheline to include her research genre in the statement of intent by saying, "the intent of this practice-based heuristic inquiry is . . ." If

continued

this makes sense to her, she might revise the statement of intent for the final dissertation.

Both the title and intent convey Micheline's position in relation to her study; that is, educational inclusion is viewed too simplistically and "needs to be" problematized. Rather than trying to pretend or obscure this position, she makes it explicit and subsequently provides a rationale for her position in the body of the proposal. One reason that Micheline could take this approach is the thoroughness with which she had immersed herself in the formal discourses on educational inclusion in her comprehensive examination and the open-minded stance she exhibited when describing perspectives she encountered in her practice setting.

A final point worth mentioning is the conciseness with which so much information is communicated—the "What," "How," and "So what?" of the inquiry as well as Micheline's position toward the phenomenon under study, the discourses to which the study will contribute, and the audiences who are likely to find the results of her study of interest/use. Although each of these points requires elaboration in the body of the proposal, the conceptual richness of the title and statement of intent convey the image of someone who is in command of her study.

Part 4—Guiding Research Questions and Research Procedures:

1. What is the nature of my "initial engagement" with the concept of educational inclusion?
2. What processes can I use to accomplish the intent of my study?
3. How do I move from initial engagement to "immersion" and "acquisition" through the discourses related to educational inclusion found in selected literature?
4. How do I move from "immersion" and "acquisition" within the literature to "immersion" through the discourse that is part of my administrative practice?
5. How do I portray the problematic nature of educational inclusion that I have come to "realize" through the processes of immersion and acquisition?
6. What heuristic can be "creatively synthesized" to inform educational policy and administrative practice regarding educational inclusion?

Authors' Commentary: Drawing from discourses on heuristics dating back to Archimedes, Micheline lays out key phases of her inquiry. Unable to say in advance what heuristic would best portray the problematic nature of educational inclusion, Micheline uses her guiding research questions to articulate the inquiry process. Each of the phrases set off in quotation marks (engagement, immersion, acquisition, etc.) relates to a specific facet of heuristic inquiry. Recognizing that these concepts might not be familiar to readers, Micheline provides a thumbnail sketch of the heuristic inquiry process as part of her introduction. Later, in the Procedures section of the proposal, she returns to these concepts and explains in more detail how she plans to carry out these processes. The final piece of this case example is a chart that Micheline included in her proposal to provide a summary of her inquiry process.

CHAPTER SIX

Proposing the Study

The fourth iteration of the deliberative cycle entails moving the study into a more public arena for formal approval. Typically, this entails a twofold review. One, conducted by an internal review board or human subjects committee, safeguards the rights of study participants. The other, conducted by the student's dissertation committee, is meant to determine whether a viable study has been conceptualized and whether the student is able to carry out the study. Because each university has specific procedures for initiating and completing these reviews, we encourage students to obtain and read carefully any manuals or guidelines provided by their institution. Rather than providing procedural advice in this chapter, we explore the ways in which the proposal extends both deliberation and discourse.

The issues raised in this chapter are meant to counterbalance a mind-set that we encounter all too often among students who see the relationship between doctoral candidate and reviewers as adversarial. From this perspective, committee members function as harsh and unforgiving critics, seeking out even the smallest flaws as an "excuse" to fail the proposal. This image of powerlessness seems to be fueled by dissertation folklore rife with horror stories about students whose work has fallen victim to faculty infighting or committee politics. Although such unfortunate situations may occur, we have never personally witnessed any. What we have noticed is the titillating sense of high drama with which such stories are passed from student to student (often in a tone of righteous indignation). Yet on more than one occasion, when students have launched into an "ain't it awful" anecdote, the comments attributed to malevolent intent often seem to us to be quite reasonable and responsible concerns about the inquiry.

We speculate that the shift from more private to more public discursive deliberation may engender a heightened sense of vulnerability. More than one student has remarked in so many words, "I'm scared I'll be found out—that I'm an intellectual fraud." "I'm afraid they'll decide I shouldn't have been accepted into the doctoral program." "They're going to see that I'm here under false pretenses, that I'm not nearly as smart as everyone thinks I am." To cope with the anxiety spawned by such self-doubts, students may assume that the best defense is a good offense. This, in turn, may prompt an adversarial posture.

In this chapter, we attempt to reframe issues related to the proposal, suggesting that they are integral to the ongoing processes of deliberation and discourse. To organize the discussion, five facets of proposing a qualitative study are considered:

- Forming a dissertation committee
- Obtaining approval from an internal review board, if necessary
- Holding a meeting to review the proposal
- Dealing with meeting outcomes
- Moving forward with the study

Forming a Dissertation Committee

In all likelihood, students will have formed the dissertation committee well before they complete the proposal for their study or schedule the proposal meeting. However, we address this aspect of dissertation work in conjunction with the fourth cycle of deliberation because this is where the purpose of the committee is often realized.

The following passage, written by a doctoral student as part of a think piece, raises questions about the role/purpose of the committee as well as concerns about committee composition:

> Since dissertation committees, for the most part, are the educational gatekeepers and guardians of academic traditions, the choice of a committee seems to be critical to the success of having a proposal approved. Most of the faculty at my school come from a tradition of empirical/quantitative research and do not "understand," "appreciate," or in some cases "approve of" qualitative approaches. (This may be a personal perception!) Should I seek a committee composed of faculty with quantitative or qualitative backgrounds? If I choose those faculty with qualitative experience, do I need to be concerned about the significant diversity within the qualitative paradigm? One of the reasons I am taking this course is to learn more about the qualitative approach to research since my previous research experiences and methods courses have been empirically based. An even more fundamental question may be whether a doctoral student like myself should be playing what Donmoyer calls the "paradigm-matching game"? Should I choose a committee composed of faculty with both qualitative and quantitative biases, then have confidence in my ability to develop a research proposal that will be acceptable to both or, alternatively, should I develop the research proposal in such a way that the make-up of the committee is irrelevant?

The connotation of "educational gatekeeper" and "guardians of academic traditions" may vary depending upon the student's view of the dissertation. For

students who see the dissertation as the last and largest "academic hoop or hurdle," the connotation is likely to be negative. The committee may be cast in the role of obstacle, whose purpose is to make completion of the study as difficult as possible. Conversely, students who see the dissertation as a potentially meaningful contribution to their field of study may have a more positive view. The committee can function in the role of mini-discourse community. Here, in a relatively protected and supportive environment, the novice scholar can hone the skills of discursive deliberation. Implications of various lines of reasoning can be explored and fine-tuned. Connections between personal deliberations and formal/public discourses can be identified and strengthened. From this perspective, the committee serves as an important resource for the student.

Conceiving of the dissertation committee as a resource provides insight into its composition. Notice how the student in the above passage tends to frame selection of committee members as "either/or" and "all or nothing" alternatives. Also notice how the alternatives are posed in the abstract—as though there is some right or wrong way to form a committee. This decontextualized approach to choosing committee members can lead to a great deal of circular thinking. Further exacerbating such quandaries is a focus on faculty politics and personality conflicts.

It is more useful to think through the specific contribution each committee member can make to the study. This helps to clarify which faculty might serve as a resource for various dimensions of the study, such as the field of study to which the dissertation will contribute, the discipline that underpins the study, the research tradition and genre that guide the inquiry, and the form of representation the portrayal is likely to take. Drawing upon knowledge of faculty interests and expertise, and building upon existing relationships, students can play a central role in creating a discourse community supportive of their deliberations.[1]

We are reminded of a student who approached us about doing an interpretive study and who kept asking, with a great sense of urgency, who she should have on her committee. When asked why she was so anxious to settle this issue, she replied, "I want to get my proposal meeting scheduled." But upon further probing, it became increasingly apparent that she did not have a firm grasp on the intent of her study, its significance, or the research genre she professed to use. Choosing committee members within such a conceptual vacuum runs several risks. Committee members may not be able to provide the necessary guidance as the study moves forward. Or, they may unconsciously begin to push the study in a direction where their expertise can be of assistance. At some point down the road, the student or committee members may begin to regret their premature commitment to each other and wonder uncomfortably if a "divorce" is possible.

This situation can be especially awkward for students who, understandably, do not want to offend or alienate faculty. Particularly sensitive is a situation in which it becomes increasingly clear that the student's advisor and committee chair is not appropriate given the emerging shape of the dissertation. To minimize the potential for such an unfortunate turn of events, we urge students to write a 3- to 5-page description of their study. Mentioned in Chapter 3 as a bridge

between the more personal research profile and the more formal research proposal, this short description provides a context for mutually exploring whether there is a fit among faculty, student, and study.

Obtaining Approval From an Internal Review Board

The proposal often looms so large that it eclipses another important review of the dissertation proposal—an institutional review to protect the rights and welfare of study participants. Although students may see this as yet one more hurdle to be surmounted, in actuality, this review is rooted in ethical principles to which all educational professionals should be committed. In essence, such reviews focus on procedures for (a) obtaining informed consent from prospective study participants, (b) ensuring privacy and confidentiality, and (c) safeguarding against unnecessary risks or potentially harmful practices. Of particular concern to reviewers are studies involving children and other vulnerable populations.

Whereas all doctoral students must be aware of their university's requirements for internal review, those who are conducting a study in another institution (e.g., a school or hospital) must also check to see if an additional review and approval is required by that organization. Larger school districts and health care facilities are likely to have an office of research that can receive and process a student's proposal. Smaller organizations, such as not-for-profit human services agencies, may have no established policy or procedure for granting access to clients. When this is the case, students may need to work with an agency administrator to secure cooperation and approval. In any event, these human subject reviews have their own time frames and deadlines that students need to factor into their overall schedule for moving forward toward the proposal meeting.

Typically, internal review boards have a specific set of forms that must be completed. Much of the information will already be spelled out in the proposal and may require only a change in format. The challenge is to convey the essence of the study, often in a limited space, so that a group with little or no context for the study understands its intent, significance, genre, and procedures. Reaction from an institutional review board can serve as a valuable reality check on how clearly one is able to explain one's study. For example, one student who submitted a vaguely conceived proposal received the letter in Exemplar 6.1. The questions raised by the school district's office of research help to illustrate the risk one runs by rushing ahead without due deliberation.

We contend that regardless of the type of research being proposed, it is the researcher's obligation to make the purpose and procedures of the study clear to others. Ill-conceived studies of any tradition or genre do not merit support. Qualitative researchers, especially those working with institutions that are unfamiliar with this type of inquiry, carry a special obligation to present their studies in a well-reasoned, credible, and ethical fashion.

Requests for additional clarification or information should be viewed not as another arbitrary hurdle, but as a signal for additional deliberation. The third

EXEMPLAR 6.1 Response From a School District Office of Research to a Student Request to Gather Dissertation Data From Students

Dear Ms. Reilly:

The Internal Review Board considered your request for a clearance to conduct your research study within our school district. The Internal Review Board deferred making a decision on your request and asks that you provide additional information. Specifically, please respond to the following:

1. What is the rationale for your study?
2. What is the focus of your study?
3. What do you expect to learn?
4. What is a community of writers?
5. What type of key information do you expect your study to provide?
6. What is the structure, process, and purpose of your students' journals?
7. What is (are) your hypotheses?
8. What is your research design?
9. What do you mean by a narrative research design?
10. How will you systematically study student writings and videotapes and your writings and teacher journal?
11. What is the purpose of this systematic study in regard to each source of information?
12. What are your anticipated measurement procedures, measures, and analyses?
13. How will your study enhance knowledge and understanding of student journals and the development of a community of writers?

Please send me a written response to this letter. After I receive your response, I will arrange for the Internal Review Board to give you additional consideration.

Sincerely . . .

Authors' Commentary: Questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 13 are related to the "So what?" of the study. The student has not made a convincing case that the study will contribute in some meaningful way to the field of education. Questions 8 and 9 press for clarification of the overall design of the study. Merely stating that she would follow a narrative research design did not communicate clearly enough the student's intent. In a quest for clarification, the Review Board then raises Questions 7 and 12, which are not germane to a narrative study being conducted within an interpretive paradigm. The student might argue that the Review Board was operating with too narrow a conception of research. Yet Questions 4, 5, 6, 10, and 11 suggest that the student did not adequately lay out the logic of justification for her research procedures. Two key concepts in the research design—*community of writers* and *student journals*—are not explained,

continued

nor is a rationale provided for their role in the study. Questions 10 and 11 point to a vagueness in procedures for analyzing or interpreting the data.

We include this example to illustrate two points. First, the student did not adequately consider the audience for her proposal. Given the role of the Internal Review Board—to safeguard the students within their district and protect personnel from intrusive and time-wasting activities—the student misjudged how much information was needed to demonstrate that the study was meaningful.

Second, the student's reaction to the letter illustrates how a responsible response to a vaguely conceived proposal can evolve into a dissertation horror story. The student, having read the letter, sent it to the chair of her dissertation committee with a handwritten note, "How can I respond to this guy and/or get him off my back!" Rather than using the district's response as a reality check and recognizing that more deliberation was needed, the student seems both resentful and dismissive of the questions about her study. We can imagine hearing about this incident in the future, with the school district cast in the role of villain for not understanding or supporting qualitative dissertation research.

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cycle of deliberation (crafting a dissertation proposal) and the fourth cycle (proposing the study) often encompass several iterative subcycles during which the plan for the inquiry is revised and refined. At some point, however, it becomes clear that the proposal is ready for formal review by the dissertation committee.

Meeting to Review the Proposal

The proposal meeting is often treated as a major milestone by students. Even those who have accepted the iterative nature of the dissertation process may see it as getting permission "to start" their study. Ideally, however, the meeting should be one more iteration of deliberation among the student's mini-discourse community. Even though students may have kept committee members informed of progress on the study, this may be the first opportunity for all committee members to meet with the student and each other to discuss the inquiry.

Purpose of the Meeting

As mentioned above, students may assume that the purpose of the meeting is to find flaws in the proposal or to "rip the document to shreds." The committee's intent, however, is to make certain that they understand the study and to assure themselves on three points. One relates to topic—is there a study here? The second relates to the inquiry process—is the student prepared/able to conduct the inquiry? The third is determining the student's capacity to enter into discursive deliberation. As these issues are explored, committee members may offer suggestions for strengthening the conceptualization of the study. This point does not necessarily mean that the study is flawed. Sometimes, students are so

immersed in the details of the study that they have difficulty pulling back and describing it in more general terms. Committee members with a bit more distance are often able to suggest words or phrasing that sharpen the clarity of ideas.

Structure and Process of the Meeting

The structure and process of the proposal meeting is shaped by the customs, culture, and rituals of each institution, school, or even program. Students who may never have attended a proposal meeting sometimes see it as shrouded in mystery. Not knowing what to expect and assuming they are not supposed to ask about this mysterious rite of passage, students can begin to stew in anxiety. In reality, the proposal review is a semipublic meeting that is announced so that interested parties can attend. Our own experience with this issue may not be typical of other schools, but it does illustrate the dynamic nature of customs surrounding the proposal (see Exemplar 6.2).

Despite variations in school culture, advisors commonly ask students to give some introductory remarks and a short summary of their study. The intent is often to see if the student is able to (a) concisely describe the study, and (b) explain his or her current thinking about the study. This is not meant to be a formal presentation, as some students assume. Nor is the student expected to walk the committee through the proposal or restate what is in the document. Rather, the student's remarks should establish a shared context for initiating a substantive conversation about the inquiry. It is important to note that committee members often look forward to this opportunity to exchange views with each other as well as to explore the study with the student. Students may erroneously assume that they are obliged to be on center stage for the entire meeting. One student, for example, brought a stack of overhead transparencies to the meeting and began to recap the contents of the proposal. Thirty minutes later, the student was still going strong, and the advisor had to interrupt this monologue to create space for discussion.

Worried that they will not be able to fill their allotted time or concerned about forgetting important details of the study, students may also prepare handouts or outlines from which to talk. Repeatedly, we have seen students misjudge the amount of time it takes to distribute and review the handouts. Although the advisor had in mind no more than a 10-minute introduction, the student monopolized a major portion of the meeting. In most cases, we see this as an unfortunate by-product of the student's anxiety. Occasionally, however, a student seems to think that this is a clever strategy to control the meeting and thereby forestall annoying or intrusive questions. Such attempts to subvert the deliberative and discursive purpose of the meeting are likely to evoke impatience, frustration, and irritation.

To safeguard against such pitfalls, students might keep in mind the multifaceted nature of the discussion. By the time of the proposal meeting, students may have attained a heightened state of self-absorption, making it difficult for them to sort out the multiple layers of conversation.

EXEMPLAR 6.2 **The Dynamic Nature of Customs and Rituals Surrounding the Proposal**

Within our school of education, it was not customary for students to sit in on proposal meetings. Although meeting dates, times, and places are posted in the school, members of our study group never realized that this meant that the meetings were open to interested parties.

With great timidity, one student finally asked if it would be all right for another study group member to come to her meeting. When this caused no consternation among faculty, group members began to invite each other to their proposal meetings. At one meeting, "guests" outnumbered committee members almost by a two-to-one ratio. Students were amazed when the committee chair first invited them to sit at the table and later asked if they wanted to add anything to the conversation. "Can you believe it?" they later shared with a sense of awed excitement. "They actually seemed pleased that we were there. Joe even said we made the discussion more meaningful."

Joe's inclusion of the students and his heartfelt remark about their contribution to the discourse brought to light the other side of the coin. Over the years, faculty seemed to have been lulled into the assumption that students would have neither the time nor the inclination to attend each other's meetings. Joe made explicit a change that had been occurring gradually as study group members involved members of their "other discourse community" with their faculty discourse community.

We have also watched with interest as students have introduced some of the nurturing qualities of the study group culture into their proposal meeting. For example, one member's meeting fell on Valentine's Day, so she set out crystal candy dishes brimming with chocolates and tiny hearts.

Lest we convey the impression that the meetings have taken on an aura of frivolity, we want to underscore two important points. First, the students had established reputations for substantive deliberation and discourse with their committee members. Second, they had submitted very thorough and well-conceived documents for committee review. This set the stage for rich and multifaceted conversation during the meeting.

Also, lest we imply that all school cultures are the same, we relate the following anecdote. As a courtesy to a professional acquaintance who was trying to conceptualize a grounded theory study, Maria agreed to serve as an informal sounding board. When it came time for the proposal meeting, the student asked her advisor if Maria could attend. Permission was granted, but the chair of the student's committee asked that Maria sit away from the table and serve as a silent note-taker for the student.

Listening to the Deliberations

The text and subtexts of the discussion may be accomplishing several purposes simultaneously. Most explicitly, the discussion gives the student an opportunity to educate faculty about the study. Students often fail to realize that they may now have more knowledge about the subject of their inquiry than faculty do. Certainly, they have the most intimate knowledge about the inquiry. Although students may feel as though they are being quizzed (or even grilled) about their

proposal, it is more likely that the questions are meant to generate among all committee members a common understanding of the study. In the process, various perspectives can be brought together in ways that support the study and, in turn, reduce the potential for contradictory and fragmenting advice.

Beyond this dissertation-focused purpose, proposal meetings provide faculty with opportunities to meet new colleagues and to build relationships/networks. Likewise, faculty often welcome the opportunity to learn from each other and engage in intellectual discussions. Students may have given little consideration to the fact that faculty at a large university may not know each other and may welcome a connection with those who share similar scholarly interests. Furthermore, faculty who are caught up in teaching courses and serving on administrative committees may relish an all-too-rare moment for exchanging points of view on an intriguing subject. In several instances, faculty have agreed to serve on the committees of our study group members because of a mounting interest in qualitative research, and they see this as a way to become more familiar with the intricacies of such a dissertation. In short, committee discourses are multilayered, and students are cautioned not to automatically equate faculty comments with criticisms of the proposal or with expectations for revisions. Audiotaping the meeting is invaluable for capturing the discussion and having a record to review once the stress and anxiety have abated. Here, too, customs vary among institutions and individual faculty, so students are cautioned to discuss audiotaping with their committee chair and to obtain permission before proceeding.

Bringing the meeting to closure entails another set of issues. Although customs vary, it is more usual than not to ask the candidate to leave the room while faculty confer. Some students take offense at "being excluded," or they see this as an intentional manipulation to increase the anxiety and drama of the meeting. Such negative views harken back to the assumption of an adversarial relationship between student and committee. In actuality, this break in the conversation gives faculty a chance to sort through points that have been raised, collect their thoughts, and formulate the outcomes of the meeting.

Dealing With Meeting Outcomes

Students often think in terms of passing or failing the proposal. In reality, a continuum of potential outcomes may result from the meeting. Naturally, the outcome that every student hopes for is an acceptance of the proposal document as written and approval to proceed with the study. At the other end of the continuum is the outcome that students dread—having to rewrite major portions of the document and schedule another committee meeting. This latter outcome is more likely to occur when students have shortchanged the deliberative process and submitted a vaguely conceptualized proposal. When students have engaged in ongoing discourse with their advisor and committee members, they are less likely to "jump the gun" and circulate an unacceptable proposal.

It is not uncommon for proposals to fall somewhere between totally adequate or totally inadequate. In the event that some revisions are needed, faculty might use one of several options for handling the process. For example, if committee members want to confirm the student's grasp of concerns raised in the meeting, the student might be asked to write and submit an addendum to the proposal. The addendum describes the student's understanding of issues that need to be addressed as the study proceeds. Because the proposal serves as a "contract" between the student and committee, the addendum can spell out major expectations or understandings that have emerged from the discussion without necessitating a major rewrite of the proposal.

Another option that may be exercised by a committee is relying upon the student's advisor to oversee and sign off on requested revisions. With this approach, the committee does not re-review the proposal or meet again. This option might be used when the conceptual structure of the study is sound, but procedural issues need some fine-tuning or some aspect of the formal discourses needs to be incorporated.

Still another option entails asking the student to proceed with the study but to schedule an interim meeting to report on progress. This approach can be especially helpful when students have not yet begun to gather and work with data. The committee may believe that the student will come to a deeper conceptualization of the study only after he or she has proceeded to this phase of the inquiry. We are reminded of one student who clung to a set of rather simplistic preconceptions about his topic—organizational learning—despite repeated prompting to consider alternative points of view. His committee requested an interim meeting in order to see if he was able to gain and portray deeper insights as he heard from study participants.

The committee's rationale for choosing a particular option may appear arbitrary or mysterious to students. To understand the reasoning behind the various outcomes, it is useful to remember the three questions that underpin the purpose of the meeting. (a) Has a worthwhile and viable study been proposed? (b) Does the student have a firm enough grasp of the research genre and procedures to carry through with the study? (c) Has the student demonstrated a capacity for discursive deliberation? In making a judgment on these three issues, committee members draw upon not only the written proposal but also their interactions with the candidate during the meeting and their knowledge of the student's scholarly capacities.

In both the proposal and the discussion during the meeting, committee members are looking for indicators that the student "owns" the study. This is a delicate balance point in the ongoing process of discursive deliberation. On one hand, students need to internalize the intent and procedures of the study so that the committee's suggestions do not undermine the conceptual integrity of the inquiry. On the other hand, students must remain open to committee input, or they run the risk of subverting the discursive process. In short, students need to have a firm enough grasp of the study to take in information and weigh its value in refining the inquiry. For example, if a committee member with an empirical

EXEMPLAR 6.3 Deliberative Versus Nondeliberative Stances

Each time we teach the introductory course on qualitative research, we ask several members of the dissertation study group to attend a session and discuss their dissertations and dissertation experiences. In one such session, Pat McMahon described how she had spent a year deliberating on the topic and intent of her study. As she touched on various aspects of planning her study, it became clear that she had immersed herself in the discourses of composition theory and reflection. She had written and discarded numerous drafts for the proposal. She had engaged in substantive discussions about her ideas for the dissertation with both the study group and various faculty. By the time of her proposal meeting, Pat had solidified her reputation with committee members as a thoughtful and conscientious doctoral candidate, a capable writer, and a disciplined thinker. Earlier in the semester, class members had had an opportunity to review Pat's dissertation and see firsthand the quality of her inquiry and the integrity of her study.

At some point during the class conversation, Pat was trying to make the point that in a highly interpretive study, the proposal is a "best guess" of what will emerge from the inquiry. Within this context, she said, "I feel very fortunate that my committee gave me, well, not quite carte blanche, but a great deal of leeway in how I would proceed with my study."

Upon hearing this, one student blurted out, "How do I get those faculty on my committee?"

The implication was that somehow Pat was lucky enough to have a "sweetheart committee" that had taken it easy on her. In one short sentence, the student demonstrated a stunning failure to grasp not just Pat's dissertation experience, but much of what we had been stressing throughout the semester.

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worldview raises questions about reliability, objectivity, and validity that are not epistemologically germane to an interpretive study, the student must be prepared to recognize that and respond appropriately.

This may engender a sense of anxiety in students who feel that they will never be prepared to handle the range of questions that might crop up in the committee meeting. Two advantages to being part of a discourse community (even if it is comprised of only the student and his or her chair) are (a) having a chance to practice responding to a variety of questions, and (b) gaining a sense of when one is ready for a formal review. In addition, students must keep in mind that they are not in the process alone. Here again, seeing the committee members as resources, not adversaries, is important. Through the committee's deliberations with the student, candidates can gain a clearer sense of which suggestions help to hone the study and which might subvert it.

In addition to the document and the student's conduct during the committee meeting, faculty's history with the student can play a role in shaping the outcomes of the meeting. The anecdote in Exemplar 6.3 raises several issues related to this point.

The notion of the "sweetheart committee" seems deeply embedded in dissertation folklore. In this approach, students hope to trade on perceived friendships with faculty in order to gain a sympathetic and kindly review of their proposal. Instead, when faculty give a thoughtful critique, students may at best be

surprised and at worst feel betrayed. This can fuel more horror stories about the arbitrary nature of committees and proposal meetings when some students "get off easy" and others are forced to "jump through more hoops." What may not be obvious is the different reputations that students may bring to the dissertation process. When students have a demonstrated record of credible work and scholarly deliberation, committee members may place their faith in the student's integrity. When students have demonstrated a commitment to discursive deliberation, committee members may have greater confidence that the student will keep them apprised of progress and seek assistance when necessary. Students who have earned such trust and respect are unlikely to misuse or abuse it in the interest of "getting by."

Moving Forward Into the Study

Before proceeding to the next cycle of deliberation, we feel that a few words are in order about the aftermath of the proposal meeting. Over the years, we have noticed that a number of study group members have experienced "downtime" after the meeting, even when it has gone very well. In one sense, this downtime is associated with a lull in moving to the next phase of the inquiry. Students who had been impatient to "get the go-ahead" suddenly find themselves procrastinating. We speculate that students may have invested so much psychic energy in conceptualizing the proposal and gearing up for the meeting that they are exhausted. The realization that quite a bit of work still lies ahead may be daunting. Practitioners who put work on the back burner while they finished the proposal may become reimmersed in the demands of their work setting. This may provide a convenient excuse for not reorganizing their energy and getting started again.

In a few instances, students have experienced downtime in the form of feelings of depression. Several students have reported going home and crying for several days after the meeting. Such a reaction would certainly be understandable if the committee had not "signed on the dotted line." But some students describe feelings of profound disappointment even when their proposal was approved. We speculate that in at least some cases, students experience a letdown because they did not receive unqualified praise from their committee. Those who are used to receiving high grades and compliments about their work may feel that their proposal is not good enough because it did not elicit accolades. It is important to remember that the proposal—no matter how well conceived—is only an interim iteration of the study and is, inevitably, not good enough. What may be seen as grudging acceptance on the part of committee members may, in fact, be a tempered response in recognition of the work that lies ahead.

Another possible source of hesitation may arise when novice researchers equate everything prior to the proposal meeting as "planning the study" and everything after it as "implementing the study." The full force of doing a dissertation may hit home at this point and trigger a crisis of confidence. We are reminded of one student who decided that he needed a desk before he could proceed with his study. Rather than visiting an office furniture store, he set about

designing a desk that he would subsequently build. We are not sure if he ever finished the desk. We know he did not finish his dissertation. Fortunately, such extreme reluctance to proceed with the study is the exception rather than the rule. For many students, digging into the information that informs their inquiry brings the study to life.

Note

1. Again we stress the point that each university/school has its own policies related to committee composition and procedures for having a dissertation committee approved. Students are encouraged to work closely with their advisor to make certain they understand and follow these institutional requirements.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Living With the Study: Generating Knowledge Through Portrayals

Approval of the research proposal initiates a fifth—usually prolonged—cycle of deliberation during which students "live with the study." Essentially, this cycle begins as student-researchers immerse themselves in the inquiry, and it continues until the dissertation document is ready for formal review by the committee.

We use the phrase *living with the study* because once this cycle begins, the study tends to take on a life of its own and, in turn, take over the student's life. Monique, for example, was an avid golfer and planned to sandwich the dissertation in between rounds of weekend golf. She made little progress until she reallocated her time on the links to deliberation and writing. Occasionally, we meet students who assert, sometimes regretfully, sometimes disparagingly, "I don't have time to do a qualitative study. My job (or family responsibilities) is too demanding." Such comments call to mind a student who taught full-time, cared for an infant son, and nursed her sister through a terminal illness while she completed her dissertation. When we asked, "How can you do this?" she explained that concentrating on the dissertation provided a haven from the other stresses in her life. Although this student's situation was extreme, many students do continue to work, and most must attend to family obligations while completing the dissertation. Yet during the fifth cycle, it is the study that consumes not just students' time but also their intellectual (and often emotional) energy. In our experience, the intensity of this cycle frequently comes as a sobering surprise, even to the most well-prepared novice researchers.

An anecdote from one member of our study group highlights an issue that contributes to this surprise. Nancy experienced considerable anxiety and embarrassment as family members kept asking, "How's the dissertation going? Are you almost finished?" It seems that her brother-in-law, who had done a traditional scientific study, took a week off from work, rented a hotel room, and came out at the end of 7 days carrying his portable computer and a completed dissertation.

158

Lurking beneath the seemingly supportive questions about Nancy's progress was the more corrosive and potentially debilitating message, "What's wrong with you that you can't get it done?"

At the risk of oversimplification, science-based studies do tend to proceed in distinct phases. At our institution, for example, it is not uncommon for the proposal to consist of the first three chapters of the dissertation. Once the proposal is approved, the student collects data, then analyzes it, then writes up the findings, discussion, and conclusion. In this epistemological ballgame, it may be possible to lock oneself away in a room and, in a relatively short time, finish the final two chapters of the dissertation. (All too often, however, this scenario yields a somewhat meager final discussion of findings and, in turn, prompts the dissertation committee to request substantial revisions of the final chapter.)

Conceiving of qualitative research in this linear and somewhat functional way creates two potential pitfalls. First, it objectifies "the data" and places them, rather than the researcher's thinking process, at the center of the inquiry. Second, it reduces intensive (and messy) cognitive processes to an orderly sequence of action steps. In an effort to help novice researchers avoid these potential pitfalls, we try to capture the messiness of the inquiry process by exploring the following facets of living with the study:

- Immersing oneself in the inquiry
- Amassing the stuff of the inquiry
- Slogging through the stuff
- Coming to a conceptual leap
- Crafting portrayals

Much of what we have to say about the first four facets would probably make little sense without some understanding of *portrayals* and their role in qualitative dissertations. Yet the significance of portrayals often remains elusive until researchers are up to their eyeballs in qualitative data. Consequently, this chicken-and-egg dilemma has haunted our writing about this fifth cycle of deliberation.

In the end, we decided to deal first with the concept of portrayals, hoping to provide a context for the more action-oriented aspects of living with the study. Therefore, Chapter 7 focuses on the following issues:

- Generating knowledge in qualitative research
- Generating knowledge through crafting portrayals
- Researcher as instrument of inquiry
- Role of reflection
- Owning the study
- Criteria for judging qualitative dissertations

The criteria for judging qualitative dissertations provide a bridge into Chapter 8, where we return to the more action-oriented facets of living with the study—immersion in the inquiry, amassing and slogging through stuff, and coming to the conceptual leap.

Generating Knowledge in Qualitative Research

Not long ago, on the first night of an introductory course on qualitative research, we were trying to give students a preliminary sense of qualitative research. "Imagine," we suggested, "that we wanted to understand this class. One approach would be to understand it in terms of observable, verifiable facts—size of the room; arrangement of chairs; the number, gender, and nationality of students; the nature of interactions among students and instructor; who talks; who remains silent; and similar 'objective' features. Through the use of audio- and videotapes or multiple observers, we could then create a description that corresponds as closely as possible to this observable reality of 'the class.' What we might come to understand through this approach is something of the classroom environment/composition. It would not, however, give us much insight into your experience of it. To understand the class in that sense, we might take another approach—asking each of you to describe what led you to register for the course, how you feel about being here, what you are learning, which materials and class activities are useful, and which questions are emerging from your deliberations. We would now have 18 different sets of qualitative data. The issue becomes, what do we do with this stuff, and how can it help us to understand the class? For example, we couldn't generalize from your reactions to all doctoral students in education, or even to all students here at the university. We—"

"Yes, that's right," one student interrupted. "Who would even care what the 18 of us thought?"

"How would you summarize or present what the 18 of us were thinking?" asked another. "I mean, how would you go from all that to something more general?"

In a nutshell, these students began to touch on the most troubling issues in qualitative research—the nature and value of knowledge generated through small, in-depth, context-bound inquiries. If such "intimate" studies do not yield reliable and valid empirical generalizations, then what form of knowledge is generated, and what makes it legitimate?

It probably does not seem all that remarkable for such questions to arise when students are first introduced to qualitative research. What is remarkable to us, however, is the way in which these nagging questions continue to haunt even the most conscientious students. In our work with more than 50 novice researchers, we consistently see these doubts resurface as they struggle to make sense of ever-mounting masses of qualitative data.

The key to resolving these doubts and bringing the dissertation to fruition lies in remembering that qualitative dissertations in education aim to generate

deeper understandings and insights into complex educational phenomena as they occur within particular contexts. To illustrate this point with the 18 students waiting expectantly for an answer to their questions, we offered the following explanation by example:

> Over the past three or four years, we've been talking to faculty who are responsible for teaching introductory courses on qualitative research. All of us are struggling to understand how to help students make sense of such an enormous and complex field. At present, three or four different approaches seem to be used. For instance, some faculty assign published examples of really good qualitative research. Other faculty use a single textbook that illustrates a variety of qualitative research methods in education. Still others concentrate on a particular research method, such as case study or ethnography, or a particular methodological issue, such as data analysis or interviewing skills. Our approach is to have you read a variety of articles that will help you develop a framework for making sense of discourses that you might encounter as you continue your studies.
>
> So we might want to understand, "What happens with our approach to introducing qualitative research? How do students experience this type of course? What does it mean to them?" By asking for your reactions, we might gain deeper insights into how our intentions for the course play out. The aim of our research would not be to *prove* that our approach is better than other approaches, or to say, "This is how all students react to learning about qualitative research." Rather, we would be trying to tease out the issues, questions, concerns, etc., that surface among students. We could use that information to make decisions about the design of our own course. But if we shared that information with other faculty, it could help them make planning decisions for their courses.

As we talked, we saw students nodding thoughtfully, as though our explanation made some sense. Essentially, we provided a contextual frame for organizing, interpreting, and presenting the data. The contextual frame consisted of a dilemma of concern to a particular group of educators, in this case, faculty teaching introductory courses in qualitative research. As discussed in Chapter 5, the contextual frame for each dissertation is created by the student-researcher as he or she situates the study within broader discourses. This frame is conveyed in brief through the intent of the study and is developed more fully through the rationale for the research (as the researcher addresses the questions of "So what?" and "Who cares?"). Without such a well-reasoned contextual frame, it is exceptionally difficult to engage in the knowledge-generating process.

But this still begs the question of how the researcher "does something" with masses of qualitative data. This issue brings us to the notion of generating knowledge through portrayals.

Generating Knowledge Through Crafting Portrayals

Earlier in the chapter, we used the phrase *intimate studies* to suggest that qualitative dissertations in education are often conducted within small, fairly circumscribed contexts. Generating knowledge out of these contexts entails a movement from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the abstract, from the idiosyncratic to the universal—in short, from the situational to the conceptual. One way to think about this issue is to keep in mind that the inquiry centers on a phenomenon as it manifests within a specific context. Whereas the context is particular, concrete, situational, and idiosyncratic, a phenomenon of sufficient educational significance bridges into the universal. The movement from the situational to the conceptual is accomplished through the crafting of portrayals. Although the number of portrayals varies depending upon the conceptual structure of the study, we generally think in terms of at least four portrayals.

Portrayal: Phenomenon and Context Under Study

The knowledge-generating process begins as the researcher strives to capture and convey the essence of what is under study. The importance of this task was wistfully expressed by Kitty and Paula when they first joined our study group. Perhaps their being art teachers gave them a particularly strong need to share their practice by "showing" it to others. Repeatedly they lamented, "If only you could come to my class so I could show you what I do. If you could just see the children. . . ." This longing to have others visit their classroom captures a fundamental task of crafting the initial portrayal. Metaphorically, because everyone cannot come to the classroom, the qualitative researcher brings the classroom to interested parties.

Thus, one of the four portrayals entails creating a "picture" that allows others to experience vicariously the phenomenon and the context under study, and thereby come to understand the complexity of both. Because this portrayal initiates the knowledge-generating process, we see it as the centerpiece of a qualitative dissertation. In more empirical studies, portrayals might take the form of a data display, such as tables, charts, or graphics. In interpretive and critical studies, portrayals are more likely to take the form of text, such as interviews, case reports, stories, conversations, autobiographical memoirs, poetry, or dramatic scenarios. Exemplar 7.1 summarizes the phenomena and contexts of the four dissertations introduced in Chapter 4.

Regardless of the specific form/format, this core portrayal must be richly descriptive, rendering a compelling picture of the phenomenon as it manifests within a particular context. The vibrancy—the believability—of this core portrayal contributes to the verité of the dissertation. As mentioned in Think Piece #3, verité in qualitative dissertations lies not in the verifiability of the portrayal

EXEMPLAR 7.1 **Phenomena and Contexts From Sample Dissertations**

Author	*Phenomenon*	*Context*
McMahon	Student reflection in writing	Community college composition course 1 academic semester
Richards	Creative dramatics	2nd grade, public school classroom 1 school year
Konzal	Parent involvement in school reform	Public school district in a small New England town
Ceroni	Teacher empowerment in school reform	Pennsylvania Lead Teacher Initiative

but in its verisimilitude. Verisimilitude, to borrow from Bruner (1986), means that the phenomenon and context under study have been rendered with sufficient detail so that they are recognizable as "truly conceivable experience."

To illustrate what we mean by "truly conceivable experience," let us introduce Grace's study. During her early years as a junior faculty member teaching English composition to underprepared college freshmen, Grace wrote a series of stories depicting various interactions between herself and students and herself and colleagues. When it came time to do her dissertation, Grace began to wonder if she could build her study around these stories. Making that determination hinged upon a careful consideration of two questions: "Could the stories serve as the core portrayal of the study?" and "If so, what phenomenon do they portray?" Initially, Grace believed that these stories portrayed the struggles of underprepared college students as they adjusted to life in the academy. Yet because she had "invented" these stories in a fictive mode, she could not present a convincing argument that the stories reflected the experiences of her students. Then Grace thought they might represent the views of more senior faculty toward underprepared college students and herself as an instructor of these students. Again, this argument could not be supported or warranted because Grace had taken no steps to verify whether her fictive accounts accurately portrayed the views of her colleagues. Still, Grace had felt compelled to write these stories, an act that required time and energy on the part of a busy instructor, wife, and mother. As Grace deliberated with the study group about the meaning of these stories, it seemed that writing fiction (creating art) was a way of grappling with problems that she was encountering as she acclimated to life in the academy. In this sense, they represented an authentic portrayal of her inner struggles, of her own angst. From this perspective, the stories could play a central role in her study—*IF* Grace could connect troubling aspects of her individual experience with more universal dilemmas associated with being junior faculty. Out of these

deliberations emerged a working title for Grace's dissertation: "From Angst to Art: Being Junior Faculty in the Academy."

Portrayal: Salient Features of the Phenomenon

As the knowledge-generating process continues, the researcher calls attention to the salient features of the phenomenon under study. These features, derived through the researcher's analysis and/or interpretation of the core portrayal, may take the form of concepts, themes, issues, dilemmas, problematics, and so on. This second, more analytic or interpretive portrayal represents a move from the situational to the conceptual as the researcher connects specific features of the core portrayal to more general/abstract issues within relevant discourse(s).

In more empirical studies, researchers typically "get at" this second portrayal through data analysis. As the name implies, researchers working in the interpretive mode "interpret" the core portrayal. Those working in a critical mode tend to "unpack" the core portrayal by using lenses of economics, social class, politics, and so on to reveal issues of power, injustice, and emancipation.

The conceptual work of crafting both the initial, descriptive portrayal and the second, more analytic/interpretive portrayal are closely intertwined. Only by resonating with their data do researchers begin to get a feel for the salient features of the phenomenon and context. These preliminary inklings prompt the writing of tentative texts as researchers try to make meaning of their data. Sharing these rudimentary texts with others helps researchers to see whether their portrayals are conveying the meanings in a clear and convincing way. This, in turn, allows researchers to more carefully shape the core portrayal.

Ultimately, the core portrayal must be crafted so that it embodies the salient features that the researcher wants to highlight and examine through analysis or interpretation. (See Think Piece #5 for a more detailed exploration of "text" and "interpretation.") Stated in the abstract, this process may strike readers as circular reasoning. To illustrate what we are trying to convey, recall Paula's and Kitty's longing for others to come to their classroom and see the children making art. Assuming for a minute that this were possible, the classroom would encompass a myriad of potentially interesting and possibly significant features. Consequently, there is no guarantee that everyone would notice the same features or understand the importance of what they were seeing. Paula and Kitty would have to direct their visitors' attention to the aspects of art making that they hoped to discuss. By the same token, as researchers bring the classroom to the audience, their descriptive portrayal must be crafted to make visible the features that they want to examine.

We emphasize the word *examine* because this underscores the analytic and interpretive work involved in crafting the second portrayal. It is not enough for qualitative researchers to call attention to the features embedded in the core portrayal and, in so many words, say, "See this portrayal? It corresponds to the phenomenon I've been studying. See, this phenomenon really does exist." Rather, through the core portrayal, researchers make public their personal/private perspective of the phenomenon under study. Then, through the interpretive

portrayal, they make public what they are thinking about the phenomenon as they have portrayed it. To do this well requires considerable rigor, integrity, and insight on the part of the researcher.

Portrayal: Implications or Lessons Learned

Embedded within the interpretive portrayal are *lessons learned* from the inquiry. Thus, another portrayal is crafted as the researcher draws out the implications of these lessons and focuses the "major messages" of the dissertation. These might take the form of recommendations for policy or practice, heuristic models, questions for further investigation, arguments for a particular position, guidelines, a polemic, and so on. Through this process, the researcher moves to another, more theoretic level, making explicit the contribution of the inquiry to the discourses.

Portrayal: The Inquiry

The broadest portrayal consists of the dissertation document as a whole. It narrates the story of the study, giving a coherent account of the dissertation inquiry—how it came about, what was done, why it was done, and how it was done. When well crafted, this portrayal creates a frame within which to view the descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory portrayals.

Relationship Among Portrayals

In one sense, these portrayals build upon each other. Without a descriptive portrayal of the phenomenon, interpretation is not possible. Without an interpretive portrayal, it is difficult to warrant the implications drawn from the inquiry. So, in this sense, the portrayals build upon each other. Yet this implies more linearity of thought and writing than is typically the case.

It is probably more useful to think of the portrayals as nesting within each other. The most concrete or specific portrayal—a description of the phenomenon as it manifests within a given context—can be visualized as the innermost core of concentric spheres. Wrapped around this centerpiece is the analytic/interpretive portrayal and, in turn, the explanatory portrayal. Enveloping all of these is the portrayal of the overall inquiry—the story of the dissertation.

As noted in Chapter 5, well-conceptualized dissertation proposals can, and often do, foreshadow these portrayals. These are, however, preliminary descriptions at best, rough approximations of the final inquiry. It is impossible to know "the end" of the dissertation story without crafting the inner portrayals. Crafting this ending, in turn, often brings into much clearer focus the conceptual point of the whole dissertation story. Once this conceptual point of the dissertation is realized, it is possible—usually necessary—to go back and carefully recraft all four portrayals so that they support and warrant one another.

To illustrate several points about generating knowledge through portrayals, we return to Kathy Ceroni's dissertation about promises made and promises broken (see Exemplars 4.2 and 4.6).

When Kathy conceptualized her research proposal, the study appeared to be about the lead teacher initiative in Pennsylvania. Using official documents and data from traditionally structured interviews, Kathy reconstructed the events giving rise to the initiative. She labeled this portrayal the "official story" of the initiative, and, to build a credible dissertation, her account had to correspond to the known and verifiable "facts." In crafting this portrayal, Kathy wrote from a more neutral, detached stance that she called "researcher as documenter." The next logical step was for Kathy to interpret this portrayal for evidence of promises made. But looking ahead to the notion of promises broken, Kathy knew that she needed additional data from other sources, specifically, individuals who had experienced the lead teacher initiative. So, Kathy held off crafting the interpretive portrayal of the promises made and began interviewing teachers.

As noted in our discussion of Kathy's study in Chapter 5, red flags went up as committee members read Kathy's initial draft of the interview transcripts. Could she claim that these interviews corresponded in some verifiable way to experiences of the teachers? Initially, Kathy insisted that they did, because she had audiotaped the interviews and transcribed them verbatim. She kept insisting, "But this is what the teachers *really* said. I was really careful with the transcription. I even included all the ums, uh-huhs, and pauses." Because Kathy had not followed the conventions of social science interviewing, however, she was hard-pressed to warrant the transcripts as the authentic experiences and thoughts *of the teachers*. Yet the interviews (like Grace's stories) were compelling and not easily dismissed.

This led Kathy to think more deeply about what these interviews represented. In the end, Kathy realized that the transcripts were an authentic account of her conversations with the teachers. And the conversations were, in turn, an authentic account of her own struggle to understand herself—her longing to be seen as a committed professional, her desire to make a positive contribution to school reform, and her evolving sense of betrayal when promises of teacher empowerment felt once again like a manipulative ploy. The interviews represented a dialectical process of coming to know herself.

As long as Kathy insisted that the interviews were about the teachers and about the Lead Teacher Initiative, the authenticity of the study was compromised. She reestablished the authenticity of her study by reconceptualizing the interviews as *her* inner views storied and then building a logic of justification for this concept. The inner views storied constituted a second core portrayal that served to complement the official story of the lead teacher initiative. This second portrayal, written from a more personal stance, created a coherent picture of how Kathy was coming to understand her own reactions to school reform initiatives. Kathy drew from literary theory to warrant the inner views storied as a form of knowledge. The verisimilitude of this portrayal allows readers to share vicariously in Kathy's dawning realization of her own assumptions, vulnerabilities, blind spots, and values that contribute to her seduction by the promises made. This, in turn, sets the stage for her interpretation of the concept *promises broken*.

Through a literary criticism of the inner views storied, Kathy calls attention to the nuances of language and experience that account for her feelings of

betrayal. These interpretations ultimately lead Kathy to the concept of bitter wisdom, which becomes the major message or lesson learned from the study.

As Kathy lays out what she means by bitter wisdom, she connects her own idiosyncratic experience to a more universal human experience of professionals caught between promises made and promises broken. *She* does not claim that her experience corresponds in detail to the experience of all or even some teachers. But in portraying the story of her dissertation inquiry, Kathy takes readers on a journey from naïveté to bitter wisdom; from trust and hope to betrayal and despair; from the promise of making the difference in the nature of schooling to the "reality" of being a pawn in some larger organizational game. By sharing vicariously in this journey, readers may revisit similar experiences of their own and come to understand more deeply the nature of professional disillusionment.

We recognize that this is a complicated example with many twists and turns in the inquiry process. Yet we feel that it is worth trying to capture because it illustrates several important points. First is the issue of what is *really* under study. Embedded in the title of Kathy's dissertation proposal were two phenomena—the Lead Teacher Initiative, and promises made and broken. As Kathy lived the study, the Lead Teacher Initiative became the less compelling phenomenon to her. As she wrestled with the meaning of her data, the initiative *per se* began to serve more and more as a context for looking at the phenomenon of teacher empowerment, or more to the point, disempowerment. This shift between what is the figure and what is the background is not uncommon in qualitative studies. Resonating with the study entails a willingness to live with the uncertainty of having the phenomenon and context fade in and out of focus, catching a glimmer of a picture only to have it blur into the masses of stuff.

The second point illustrates why we refer to a minimum of four portrayals. Qualitative researchers may find themselves in a position similar to Kathy's—immersed in a phenomenon and context that are so complex that more than one portrayal is needed to describe them. Kathy chose to devote one chapter to the portrayal of the official story of the initiative and a separate chapter to the portrayal of the inner views storied. The five-chapter format traditionally associated with dissertation reports assumes that all of the relevant data can be displayed in a single chapter. Because qualitative researchers strive to understand and, in turn, portray the nuances of phenomenon within context, one chapter may be too confining. Sometimes—but not always—it is possible to anticipate the need for more than one core portrayal and to lay that out in the research proposal.

Interestingly, such deviations can be troubling to faculty who believe that a dissertation must conform to the conventions of the science report format. Some might argue that the rigor of the study is compromised by alternative formats, and that qualitative researchers can report their "findings" in a scientific form. It is our contention that this view is more characteristic of those grounded in a qualitative/empirical tradition. Those working in a qualitative/interpretive tradition would see this as a flaw in the integrity of the overarching portrayal of the inquiry. The dissertation document itself would embody a mismatch between the research genre used to conduct the study and the research genre used to report it. The logic of this inconsistency would be hard to justify.

A third point raised by our account of Kathy's study is the relationship among the descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory portrayals. The form and substance of Kathy's core portrayals (i.e., the official story and the inner views storied) precluded certain interpretations and supported others. This illustrates how qualitative researchers begin to warrant the truth claims of their study. If the intent of the study is to generate truth claims that meet the scientific criteria of reliability, validity, and verification, then the researcher must craft the core portrayal in a way that demonstrates its correspondence to the phenomenon under study. However, if the intent of the study is to capture and convey the researcher's interpretive understanding of a phenomenon, then the coherence of the portrayal is the issue. (See Think Piece #3.)

Fourth, Kathy's choice of literary criticism as the research genre for her study provided an epistemological foundation upon which she could build her logic of justification. For example, when she came to the concept of *inner views storied*, Kathy had to provide a logical justification for this portrayal. Had she been working in an empirically grounded research genre, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to warrant this portrayal.

Finally, although the phenomenon of empowerment/disempowerment was foreshadowed in the title of the proposal, it would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, to deliberately set out to examine it. Kathy, using herself as the primary instrument of inquiry, followed where her data were leading. In this sense, the study came alive and began pushing and pulling Kathy in directions she had not fully anticipated in her proposal. At the same time, however, Kathy was constantly making choices about which leads to follow and which to drop. These choices were based in a need for deeper understanding of a phenomenon that was disturbing to Kathy, yet one she could not fully or clearly articulate at the outset of the inquiry. In part, the integrity of Kathy's study lay in the persistence with which she pursued the nebulous shadow lurking at the heart of her inquiry. She would not rest and was not satisfied until this shadowy figure had been brought into relief.

We hope that this thumbnail sketch helps to illustrate how knowledge is both generated and presented through interconnected portrayals. The meaning of the dissertation does not lie in the data *per se* but in the researcher's understanding and use of the data. This leads to an important aspect of qualitative research to which we alluded in the final point about Kathy's dissertation—the researcher as primary instrument of the inquiry.

Researcher as Instrument of Inquiry

To carry out a qualitative study, a variety of methods and techniques can be used to identify and gather data. Within these strategies, a host of specific instruments (e.g., questionnaires, audio- or videotapes, interview protocols) may be used to gather/record information about the phenomenon and context under study. However, these are only ancillary tools in interpretive inquiries. At the heart of the inquiry is the researcher's capacity for encountering, listening, under-

EXEMPLAR 7.2 **Developing Self as Instrument: Developing a Capacity to Listen**

As I finished my doctoral course work, I had the opportunity to become the first "Resident in Education" at a large urban teaching hospital. Patterned after the concept of medical residencies, this position was intended to provide an intensive learning experience for educators who wanted to practice in hospital settings. At the time, this was a fairly new arena of practice for educators, and part of my responsibility was to articulate what contribution educators might make to the hospital. In order to understand this role, I visited other educators in health care facilities around the city. From this experience, I had tremendous respect for some of my peers, and complete disdain for others. So, when I began to formalize plans for my dissertation, I knew there were certain people I should interview for my study of hospital-based education, but I couldn't stand the thought of talking to them. As I worked and reworked the statement of intent for the study, I kept imagining myself transcribing certain interview tapes and wanting to throw up. Finally, I came to an intent for the study that moved me out of this terribly judgmental place. Inside, I felt genuinely curious to hear from each and every person. For me, this was the moment I moved from a self-serving stance to a posture of inquiry. That freed me to proceed with the study. I still had my own views and beliefs about education. But they would no longer result in an immediate rejection of perspectives that didn't match my own.

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standing, and thus "experiencing" the phenomenon under investigation. Rather than assuming the traditional stance of a detached and neutral observer, an interpretive inquirer, much like a tuning fork, resonates with exquisite sensitivity to the subtle vibrations of encountered experiences. Eisner (1991), in *The Enlightened Eye*, uses the phrase "self as an instrument" to describe this capacity for resonating with experience: "The self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it. It is the ability to see and interpret significant aspects. It is this characteristic that provides unique, personal insight into the experience under study" (p. 33).

Developing oneself as instrument entails an honest understanding of what one brings to an interpretive inquiry. The Personal Research Profile (see Chapter 2) is meant to facilitate this process of self-understanding and self-disclosure. By this we do not mean that students are obliged to bare their souls or engage in pseudo-psychoanalysis. Rather, it means cultivating a heightened awareness of one's worldview, experiences, preconceptions, biases, and so on, and recognizing how these may expand or constrict one's capacity for resonating with the experience of the study. Exemplars 7.2 and 7.3 illustrate two facets of developing self as instrument—acknowledging one's relationship with potential participants in the study and acknowledging one's personal (possibly traumatic) experience with the phenomenon under study.

Integral to the notion of *self as instrument* is a capacity for reflection. Through reflection, the interpretive researcher resonates with both the specific

EXEMPLAR 7.3 Developing Self as Instrument: Issues of Vulnerability and Authenticity

For her dissertation, Carol was contemplating a case study of learning disabilities among nursing students. As she talked, it was clear that she felt passionately about this issue and, as a nurse educator, felt that certain instructional supports were essential for these students. Several faculty with whom she had met for guidance on doing case study sensed that her interest stemmed from a personal struggle with attention deficit. When some gentle prodding confirmed that this was indeed the case, the following conversation ensued between Carol and Maria.

"Carol, you might begin by writing your own story, explaining what brings you to this study."

"But," Carol protested, "wouldn't telling my story make the study biased? Wouldn't the results be more acceptable if I research the issue in a more detached, depersonalized way?"

"Another—more interpretive—way to look at the issue of your personal experience is that it allows you to resonate more deeply and fully with the information you gather from participants in your study. Rather than contaminating the study, your perspective can help you to make more sensitive, more powerful, interpretations."

"Yes," Carol reluctantly conceded. "But, I'm not sure I want my story to be in the dissertation."

"Writing your story doesn't automatically mean you have to include it in the dissertation," Maria countered. "It allows you to see more clearly the biases and preconceptions you are bringing to the study. Once you know that, you can make a conscious choice about whether to share the biases directly through your story or indirectly through a more descriptive summary. Either way, the study becomes more authentic, because you acknowledge the bias."

Authors' Commentary: Although Carol kept insisting that she wanted to do an interpretive inquiry, she brought to the dissertation at least a vaguely held notion that *real* research is objective. Also embedded in her comments is the assumption that her personal experience will contaminate the study, and that distancing herself from the study will somehow "neutralize" the effects of the trauma she experienced as a learning-disabled student.

Carol's reluctance to share her personal story touches on another issue, what we have come to see as a "dark side" of interpretive inquiry. The stance of self as instrument requires a degree of vulnerability. Upon further discussion, Carol acknowledged experiencing discrimination at the hands of insensitive teachers. Telling her story entailed making public the pain of humiliation engendered by this discrimination.

Thus, the suggestion that Carol write her story is meant to discharge some of the heretofore unspoken pain that underlies the intent of the study. It is hoped that this would help her to shift from a crusading stance to a more deliberative posture of inquiry.

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and the significant aspects of contextualized experience. To understand what this means, it is helpful to consider, albeit briefly, the notion of reflection.

Role of Reflection

We are almost reluctant to introduce the concept of reflection, because in some circles, it has been trivialized to the point of cliché. Yet with the publication of Donald Schön's book *The Reflective Practitioner* in 1983, the notion of reflection resurfaced as an important thread in the discourses of education and educational research. Schön draws from the work of John Dewey, in particular his notion of "education as reconstruction of experience" in *Democracy and Education* (1916). Dewey suggests that although experience is the context from which learning emerges, it is the act of reconstructing *the meaning* of experience that actually yields learning. Reconstructing the meaning of experience is, in essence, the interpretive act at the heart of interpretive inquiry.[1] In our experience, it has been useful to distinguish among various forms of reflection, including reflection as recollection, reflection as introspection, and conceptual reflection.

Reflection as Recollection

In this form of reflection, researchers resonate with the situational aspects of encountered experience, recalling the specific details of what happened, when it occurred, and who was involved. In this sense, reflection as recollection is a matter of giving an account of experience.

Even when an encountered experience consists of a fairly discrete event, reflection through recollection requires time and discipline. The task becomes truly daunting, however, when the encountered experience (e.g., classroom practice, an educational initiative) occurs over a prolonged time, involves many individuals, and encompasses a large number of discrete yet interconnected events. One aspect of living with the study is amassing "stuff" about the phenomenon under investigation as it unfolds within such complex and dynamic contexts. Ultimately, the stuff allows the researcher to recollect--to give an account of—encountered experience. Unlike the ephemeral events that comprise the actual experience, the recollection provides a stable record or permanent text that can be examined and interpreted over time.

In empirically oriented studies, the stable record typically takes the form of systematic documentation that corresponds with verifiable facts or details. In more interpretively oriented studies, particularly those within arts-based genres, the recollection is a coherent account that may take more aesthetic forms, such as stories, poems, drama, sketches, and so on. In this case, Reflection as Recollection begins to shade into Reflection as Introspection.

Reflection as Introspection

In this form of reflection, researchers look within, examining their own mental and emotional responses to encountered experience. A word of caution is in order here, for this aspect of reflection seems to conjure up images of "touchy-feely," highly emotive, self-confessional writing. When students try self-

consciously for this "feeling" effect, the results can seem like solipsistic blatherings—little more than a litany of researchers' likes and dislikes, a self-serving justification of preconceptions, or a judgmental pronouncement about the rightness and wrongness of others' points of view. At their best, however, introspective reflections can be valuable data, taking the researcher beyond the specific to the significant aspects of encountered experience and creating a record of insights and questions.

Thus, living with the study also entails researchers' capacity to be aware of and capture their own responses to the phenomenon under study as it manifests in particular contexts. A variety of techniques can be used to support introspective reflection. In the social sciences, researchers keep extensive and detailed fieldnotes. In grounded theory, researchers do "memoing." In narrative, journaling is commonly used.[2] Kitty, the art teacher introduced earlier, is adapting the artist's sketchbook to create a visual as well as verbal record of her introspective reflections. As these examples illustrate, the choice of technique can be based on the researcher's field of study, the research genre of the inquiry, and the researcher's own talents and abilities.

Regardless of the particular technique employed, the aim is to keep as thorough and systematic a record as possible of one's inner resonating with the experiences of the study. This serves a dual purpose. First, it creates a stable record of one's thought processes—the insights, questions, speculations, hunches, tentative interpretations, and so on that occur as one lives the study. This record can be extremely helpful when it comes time to recollect, reconstruct, and portray the overall story of the inquiry. Even more important, however, is the other purpose. Through introspective reflection, the researcher begins to ponder possible meanings embedded in encountered experience—meanings for him- or herself and meanings for others. In this way, introspection may be thought of as *accounting* for what has happened, thus initiating a theorizing process that intensifies in the next form of reflection.

Conceptual Reflection

In this form of reflection, researchers begin to connect their recollective and introspective reflections with broader theoretical concepts and issues. Instead of relying on their immediate or instinctive interpretation of events, researchers begin to draw upon formal knowledge to (re)construct the meaning of experiences *in relation to the phenomenon under study*. In conceptual reflection, interpretive researchers are resonating simultaneously with the specific context of the study and with existing discourses about the phenomenon under study.

Earlier in the book, we cautioned against the dysfunctional notion that qualitative researchers can or should come to their inquiry as a blank slate. It is in conceptual reflection that such naïveté takes its toll by leading to overly simplistic interpretations and impoverished conceptualizations. Glaser and Strauss (1967), in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, use the concept of theoretical sensitivity to describe the wisdom that researchers bring to the inquiry. Even though

they are writing in the field of sociology and their use of masculine pronouns is somewhat dated, their conception of theoretical sensitivity helps to illuminate the notion of conceptual reflection:

> The sociologist should also be sufficiently theoretically sensitive so that he can conceptualize and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data. Once started, theoretical sensitivity is forever in continual development. It is developed as over many years the sociologist thinks in theoretical terms about what he knows, and as he queries many different theories on such questions as What does the theory do? How it is conceived? What is its general position? What kinds of models does it use? Theoretical sensitivity of a sociologist has two other characteristics. First, it involves his personal and temperamental bent. Second, it involves the sociologist's ability to have theoretical insight into his area of research, combined with an ability to make something of his insights. (p. 46)

Here we come full circle in the notion of developing oneself as instrument, for the quality of conceptual reflection depends upon the sensitivity to see, as Eisner (1991) puts it, with an "enlightened eye." In interpretive dissertations, what researchers bring to the inquiry is as important as what they discover as they live with the study. Ultimately, the quality of the portrayals and, in turn, the credibility of the dissertation rests upon the student-researcher's capacity for insightful recollective, introspective, and conceptual reflection. Finely tuning one's self as instrument allows for deeper, richer resonance with the nuances of the phenomenon under investigation.

Owning the Study

Qualitative researchers live with the phenomenon and context of the study, immersing themselves in it and striving to know it as deeply and intimately as possible. As they resonate with what they are seeing, hearing, saying, doing, experiencing, thinking, and feeling, they come to some essential understanding of the phenomenon and what it means. Through the process of crafting portrayals, researchers find ways to represent their understanding for others, to make their private insights public.

"But what if my understanding isn't right?" many of our dissertation advisees have literally cried in despair. "What difference does my understanding make, anyway? Who am I to say what is really going on?"

The angst reflected in these plaintive questions dissipates as students rework, yet one more time, their understanding of the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions that underpin qualitative research. For example, when qualitative researchers try to "get at" and portray an essential understanding of a phenomenon, they are not claiming that they have identified and proven its essential nature. Nor are they claiming to have discovered or verified

THE TRUTH about the phenomenon. Rather, they are claiming to portray the essence of *their* experience with and understanding of the phenomenon. If they have inquired into the phenomenon with sensitivity, rigor, and integrity, then their understanding of the phenomenon, the way they have made sense of it, may have utility for others who are struggling with the phenomenon in similar contexts.

So, we respond to students as they confess their self-doubts and despair, "What gives you the right to create this portrayal is that you've been there. *You* have done the study. If others don't agree with your understanding of the phenomenon, if they don't find it meaningful or useful, they are at liberty to create a portrayal that works for them. That's the way the discourse evolves. But for now, *you* are the one who has spent time living this study. You are the only one who can say what meanings you have come to as a result of being immersed. And quite frankly, there are probably a lot of people out there—people in roles similar to yours—who will probably be very grateful that you invested the time, energy, and thought to investigate this phenomenon. They don't have the resources or inclination to do what you've done. But they can benefit from your work, even if their experience or the way they would explain their experience is very different from yours. The synergy generated by complementary perspectives and the tension between disparate perspectives helps to further the discourse. It's the way knowledge is generated discursively."

The intent of our response is to encourage students to "own their study," to embrace more fully the epistemological assumption that the significance of their study lies not within the data *per se* but in the meaning they make of the data. Our very first experience of this issue was captured in an anecdote by Maria (Exemplar 7.4) as she and Joan Leukhardt, another member of our early dissertation study group, both hovered on the verge of a conceptual leap but could not quite get hold of their studies.

For us, the mosaic metaphor gives a gestalt of the interpretive knowledge-generating process that we see as the essence of qualitative inquiry. The piles of pebbles represent all of the stuff that researchers amass as they live the study. Resonating with the data occurs as researchers continually sort and sift the pebbles. As researchers become intimately familiar with the texture, color, size, and shape of the pebbles, they can begin to see possibilities for creating mosaics about the intent of the study. In any given pile of pebbles, an almost limitless variety of mosaics can potentially be created. In the end, each researcher must own his or her responsibility for deciding what mosaic is most compelling or meaningful to create. Coming to this decision is not a linear process. Rather, it entails a going back and forth between the details represented by the pebbles and the larger meanings that might be drawn from the details. It is, as we have said, a movement from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the abstract, from the idiosyncratic to the universal, from the situational to the conceptual. This movement is, in essence, the task of crafting portrayals. It is the intellectual work of the fifth cycle of deliberation. It is the most intensively demanding work of qualitative research.

EXEMPLAR 7.4 Owning the Study—Owning the Knowledge-Generating Process

During one phase of my research, I carried with me a binder containing transcripts of the interviews I had done with directors of hospital-based education and printouts of coded data. For weeks I had been sorting and resorting the data trying to find some meaning or pattern in all the codes. Despite hours at the computer, everything I wrote seemed incredibly superficial, even banal. So, when asked how my project was going, I would point to the binder and respond, "Well I have all this—this stuff I've been gathering." I was hard put to explain what I was researching and the nature of my results.

One summer evening as we sat on Noreen's back porch, Joan brought to the study group, not a neatly organized binder, but a large cardboard box crammed full of folders with student papers; printouts with test scores and other demographic profiles; and, most intriguing to me, imaginative collages created by her students. "What am I going to do with all this?" Joan echoed my own frustration. "I know it means something, but I can't figure out what."

As she talked, I had the image of gathering colorful pebbles from a variety of beaches and then fussing endlessly to sort the pebbles into piles of comparable size, color, texture, beach of origin, etc. Despite the volumes of pebbles I had gathered, it WAS superficial and banal to talk about the various piles as though they somehow meant something. Suddenly I realized that I could use the pebbles in a very different way. I could stop trying to maintain the identity of each separate pebble, and could, instead, use them collectively to create a colorful mosaic. In a flash of insight, I realized that the significance of my data did not lie in accounting for the individual pieces of data, but rather in using the pieces to create a meaningful picture of hospital education as I understood it. With this realization, I finally understood a constructivist view of theory put forth by George Kelly (1970):

> [A theory] . . . is not a collection of information, regardless of how carefully catalogued it may be. Nor is it an account of a sequence of events, no matter how well authenticated. In essence a theory is simply a way of highlighting events so they may be viewed in some kind of perspective. (p. 260)

It was my theoretical sensitivity about hospital-based education that would allow for the movement from a collection of pebbles to a mosaic—from data to theory.

Ultimately, the number, form, and substance of the interconnecting portrayals are unique to each qualitative study. They are shaped by an interplay among the intent of the study, the nature of the inquiry, the researcher's mode of making meaning, and the messages that emerge as the researcher resonates with all aspects of the study. Guiding this complex knowledge-generating process are the "rules of the game" that are embedded within the research genre of the study. This is the reason we find it more useful to think of qualitative research methods not as techniques, but as logic of justification.

Criteria for Judging Qualitative Dissertations

The *logic of justification* is the researcher's explanation of (a) the procedures used to craft each portrayal, and (b) the lines of reasoning used to move from one portrayal to the next. Descriptions of specific techniques for data gathering or analysis are meaningful only in relation to their role in the knowledge-generating process. To a great extent, the credibility of a qualitative inquiry rests upon the researcher's ability to articulate this logic of justification in a clear and cogent manner. Of critical importance is the extent to which the procedures "fit" with the knowledge-generating assumptions that underpin the inquiry. Mismatches between these assumptions and the research procedures create logical inconsistencies or conceptual flaws that compromise the credibility of the study.

Flaws in the logic of justification can potentially occur anywhere in the inquiry process. The nature of such flaws and where they occur can jeopardize the soundness of a study in one or more ways. We have found several criteria to be particularly useful in judging the soundness of qualitative dissertations (Figure 7.1). These criteria do not represent discrete characteristics of qualitative dissertations. Rather, they complement each other and often blend together.

Integrity (as in Architecture)

This criterion speaks to the importance of the dissertation document as a portrayal by calling attention to the conceptual structure of the entire inquiry. In a structurally sound dissertation, the portrayals support each other and flow together conceptually. The logic of justification provides well-reasoned connections between how the inquiry was conducted and the knowledge generated from it. Truth claims are supportable given the epistemological assumptions guiding the inquiry. The voice and stance of the dissertation author are congruent with the mode of inquiry and convey the researcher's relationship to the study and study participants.

Verité

This criterion has several connotations related to the intellectual honesty and authenticity of the study. One connotation relates to the notion of self as instrument, calling attention to the authenticity of the researcher. Contributing to the verité of the study is evidence that the researcher has taken pains to cultivate a mind-set conducive to an authentic inquiry. For example, tendencies toward cheerleading or the vendetta mentality have been recognized, and efforts have been made to shift to a posture of deliberative curiosity. There is a heartfelt desire to learn from the inquiry rather than to promote oneself or one's pet theories. Red flags about authenticity can be triggered when the researcher conveys an inability to handle large masses of data, a limited capacity for tolerating cognitive

Integrity (as in architecture). Is the work structurally sound? Does it hang together? Is the research rationale logical, appropriate, and identifiable within an inquiry tradition? Is the proper persona (or voice) used for the author(s) and other participants?

Verité. Does the work ring true? Is it consistent with accepted knowledge in the field? Or, if it departs, does it address why? Does it fit within the discourse in the appropriate literature? Is it intellectually honest and authentic?

Rigor. Is there sufficient depth of intellect, rather than superficial or simplistic reasoning? Are the conclusions carefully crafted from sufficiently thick and rich data? Does the researcher avoid solipsistic reasoning? Was reflection done in a careful/systematic rather than haphazard fashion? Has the analysis/interpretation of the core portrayal been thorough/exhaustive?

Utility. Is the inquiry useful and professionally relevant? Does it make a contribution to a recognized field of study or established bodies of discourse? Does the piece have a clearly recognizable professional and/or scholarly audience? Is it educative?

Vitality. Is the inquiry important, meaningful, and nontrivial? Does it have a sense of vibrancy, intensity, and excitement of discovery? Do metaphors and images communicate powerfully?

Aesthetics. Is it enriching and pleasing to anticipate and experience? Does it give me insight into some universal part of my educational self? Are connections between the particular and the universal revealed in powerful, provocative, evocative, and moving ways? Does the work challenge, disturb, or unsettle? Does it touch the spirit?

Ethics. Is there evidence that privacy and dignity have been afforded all participants? Has the inquiry been conducted in a careful and honest way? Has every effort been made to represent the views of others accurately and in the spirit with which they were shared/intended? Has the researcher recognized and acknowledged his or her own preconceptions/biases/assumptions and considered how these might distort understanding? Does the language of the dissertation adhere to the principles of nondiscrimination? Does the inquiry have an ethical sensibility?

Figure 7.1. Criteria for Judging the Soundness of Qualitative Dissertations

dissonance and ambiguity, a need to push for premature closure, or a tendency for overly simplistic or facile explanation. Conversely, a sense of the researcher's authenticity is conveyed when time and energy have been invested in understanding the discourses that underpin both the subject of the inquiry and the inquiry process. Also contributing to authenticity are conscientious efforts to move from naïveté to sensitivity and wisdom; from narrow and superficial understanding to deeper, richer conceptualizations. This sense of authenticity is often conveyed as the researcher describes the procedures used to gather, document, and make sense of information about the phenomenon and context under

study. It also comes across as researchers engage in deliberative discourse with their advisor and committee members.

A second connotation of authenticity relates to the researcher's account of his or her reactions and thinking throughout the inquiry process. This connects with the researcher's capacity for reflection, with the self-discipline to engage systematically in a reflective process, and with a willingness to document the process. Authenticity in this sense of the word is communicated in two ways. One is through the written account of procedures provided in the dissertation document. The other is through an ongoing engagement in deliberative discourse with one's research advisor, committee members, or other relevant parties.

The third connotation of authenticity is, perhaps, the most elusive yet crucial meaning for qualitative research. It relates most directly to the authenticity of the core portrayal created to describe the phenomenon and the context under study. As mentioned in Think Piece #3, verité in empirical studies hinges upon a correspondence between the portrayal and the entity being portrayed. Reliability, validity, and verifiability are the hallmarks of truthful, authentic, or real correspondence. In interpretive studies, verité rests upon the coherence and verisimilitude of the portrayal.

To give a felt sense of the relationship among authenticity, correspondence, and coherence, we recount an anecdote that occurred while we were attending the 1996 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in New York City (Exemplar 7.5). One evening, we had the pleasure of seeing *Inherit the Wind*, a play by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee based on the Scopes monkey trial. At the end of the play, as we left the theater, Maria expressed some curiosity about the "facts" of the trial and used her musing as a springboard for thinking about correspondence and coherence.

Thus, what goes into the core portrayal depends upon the inquiry tradition that underpins the intent of the study. Within empirical inquiries, researchers strive to create core portrayals that *correspond* as carefully as possible to "objectively" verifiable facts of the phenomenon under study. Within interpretive inquiries, researchers strive to create core portrayals that will yield deeper understanding and insight through a *coherent* interpretation of the phenomenon.

Rigor

This criterion speaks to the quality of thought that goes into the inquiry and is intricately connected to the criteria of integrity and verité. At issue is the carefulness, precision, and elegance of the researcher's thinking as he or she seeks to fulfill the intent of the study.

When we first drafted Chapter 5, we wrote a fairly strong caution about the dangers of The Rumpelstiltskin Syndrome. This jaundiced view had been shaped by our encounters with a number of students who seemed to think that working with existing data would be an easy way to finish the dissertation. When students have given little thought to what purpose this convenient data might serve, we are skeptical about the conceptual merits of such studies. Our view has been tempered, however, by the work of a student who is crafting an interpretive study

EXEMPLAR 7.5 Musings About Correspondence, Coherence, and Authenticity in Qualitative Research

As I left the theater after seeing *Inherit the Wind,* I was perplexed. I had always thought that William Jennings Bryant, prosecuting attorney in the case, was a well-regarded jurist and intellectual. Did he *really* espouse creationism? Did Jennings *really* collapse and die at the end of the trial? Who was the defense attorney in the original case? All I could think of was F. Lee Bailey. I knew that wasn't right, but I couldn't jar his name loose so that Clarence Darrow's could come to mind. Did H. L. Mencken *really* cover the story?

Even as I asked these questions, I knew that they didn't really matter within the context of the drama. The playwrights had no intention of giving a factual account of the trial. (One could always review the court transcripts for *that* story.) In fact, as the authors' note in the playbill says:

> *Inherit the Wind* is not history. The events which took place in Dayton, Tennessee, during the scorching July of 1925 are clearly the genesis of this play. It has, however, an exodus entirely its own.
>
> Only a handful of phrases have been taken from the actual transcript of the famous Scopes trial. Some of the characters of the play are related to the colorful figures in that battle of giants; but they have life and language of their own—and, therefore, names of their own.
>
> The collision of Bryant and Darrow at Dayton was dramatic, but it was not a drama. Moreover, the issues of their conflict have acquired new dimension and meaning in the seventy years since they clashed at the Rhea County Courthouse. So *Inherit the Wind* does not pretend to be journalism. It is theatre. It is not 1925. The stage directions set the time as "Not too long ago." It might have been yesterday. It could be tomorrow.

For me, the more compelling question was, "In what ways do the themes of the drama speak of important and enduring human dilemmas?" The play's significance in this sense was underscored by a recent *New York Times* article reproduced on a huge placard in the theater lobby. The article described a recent attempt by Christian fundamentalists to ban the teaching of Darwinism.

As I reflected on the difference between my questions about the "facts" of the original trial and my musings about the tensions between belief and reason, I began to think about the notion of authenticity in qualitative research. Suddenly, it seemed that I was understanding at a deeper level the distinction between correspondence and coherence.

Within the qualitative/empirical tradition, authenticity refers to the reliability and verifiability with which the account of the event corresponds to the "real" details of the event (e.g., date, time, place, people, words spoken). Truth claims can be made only if certain procedures have been followed to guarantee to the greatest extent possible that the researcher's account matches or corresponds to the event. Thus, data-gathering techniques emphasize "objective" observation and recording of information, such as audio and video recordings; verbatim transcripts; fieldnotes (preferably multiple researchers taking fieldnotes with high degrees of interobserver reliability); a large number of people agreeing that "what we say we saw was what happened"; and triangulation (my perception is going to be slanted by my angle of vision, so if I can get two other angles of vision, there will be a more accurate "fix" on what really happened). All such

continued

techniques are aimed at increasing confidence in the correspondence between the original event(s) and the description or portrayal of it.

Within the qualitative/interpretive tradition, the concern is not with what *really* happened in the details of the trial. Rather, it asks, "Does the account portray an event in a compelling way—not the event *per se*—but some fundamental human dilemma embedded in the event?" Truth claims are based on the ways in which the researcher gets at and portrays the fundamental human dilemma. In the interpretive mode, the issue is not correspondence to some verifiable event. It is in a coherent and authentic rendering of the meaning of the experience in a way that makes clearer the connection between the individual/idiosyncratic and the universal.

I am reminded of my human dilemma puddle and the concerns some students have about profound/incomprehensible dilemmas of practice. It may not be possible (as so many faculty caution students) to study such dilemmas empirically. Yet it may be possible to "get at them" through interpretive inquiry. And the more authentic expression of a human dilemma may be portrayed more coherently through an aesthetic modality such as narrative, story, poetry, drama, visual arts, music, or dance. This helps me to see more clearly the rationale for arts-based genres of qualitative/interpretive research.

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from qualitative data collected in conjunction with an empirical study of family caregivers. She has spent hours diligently reading and rereading the data. She has made careful comparisons between the broad picture painted by a companion set of quantitative data and the nuanced details of individual responses embedded in the qualitative data. She has begun to chart information to show potential connections among sets of data collected at 6-month intervals. Through this type of disciplined immersion in the data, she has begun to tease out issues and concerns of family caregivers that had been lost in the statistical analysis of quantitative data. All of these procedures contribute to the rigor of the study. But the most impressive aspect of her inquiry has been the insightful way she has used the emerging issues and concerns to speculate about the circumstances of family caregivers and thereby to open up new lines of thinking for exploration. These explorations have led her in two directions—to the literature on family caregiving, and deeper into the data to see if there is support for her hunches. As a result of her work, we have been persuaded that there may be more potential for crafting a viable study around an existing body of data. We cite this example to illustrate the type of careful and creative thinking that contributes to the rigor of a study.

Utility

This criterion speaks to the significance of the inquiry and the extent to which the researcher has connected the situational aspects of the study to issues embedded within broader discourses. Particularly indicative of the dissertation's utility are the implications that the researcher draws from the portrayal of the phenomenon. When these implications address the intent of the study and are

presented in ways that are useful to the intended audience, the dissertation has accomplished its purpose.

The titles of two sessions conducted at the 1996 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association help to underscore an issue that we consider vital to the criterion of utility. One session was titled "Yes, But Is It Research? The Conversation Continues: Should a Novel Count as a Dissertation in Education?" "An educational dissertation in the form of a novel" was used symbolically to raise issues about the legitimacy of knowledge generated and portrayed through artistic, rather than scientific, modalities. If a dissertation could not be judged on its scientific merits, could it, in fact, count as research?

A day later, the flip side of the issue was debated in a session titled "Yes, But Is It Art? A Critical Examination of Artistic Research From an Aesthetic Perspective." Here, the concern focused on the issue, "Should the results of arts-based educational research be held to the same aesthetic standards as works created by artists?" If not, then was it appropriate to claim such studies as arts-based?

Both sides of the issue raise intriguing, thorny, and substantive concerns about dissertations that are pushing the edges of tradition and convention. Yet we contend that the debate as it played out at AERA overlooked an equally key question: "Is the research educative?" Students earning degrees in education have an obligation, it seems to us, to conduct dissertation research that contributes to the field of eduction. Therein lies the utility of such inquiries to educational discourse communities.

At first glance, this point may seem too obvious to belabor. Yet repeatedly, we have seen students express their ideas for the dissertation in psychological or sociological terms. Confounding the situation is the history of educational researchers drawing their methods from the social sciences. Novices concerned with the credibility or legitimacy of their research may focus on meeting the criteria embodied within those research traditions. More recently, as research methods have been drawn from the arts and humanities, concerns may focus on meeting the criteria of artistry. In either scenario, the obligation to be educative may be lost.

Vitality

Good qualitative dissertations meet this criterion in several ways. A sense of vitality arises from the verisimilitude of the core portrayal. When this portrayal succeeds in creating a vicarious sense of the phenomenon and context of the study, readers often feel a sense of immediacy and identification with the people and events being described. So, the study comes alive for the reader.

By the same token, vitality alludes to the sense of vibrancy and intensity that accompanies an inquiry that is genuinely meaningful to the researcher. In introducing the fifth cycle of deliberation, we talked about the study coming alive and taking on a life of its own. In a well-conceived, well-written portrayal of the inquiry, this sense of aliveness often shines through in the story of the study.

As researchers press for deeper meanings in their data, the emerging ideas often become more and more robust. Insightful (as opposed to banal) interpretations bring concepts to life. At the same time, researchers may incorporate powerful metaphors and vivid images into the text. This, too, gives the study a sense of vitality and an aesthetic quality as well.

Aesthetics

When the dissertation has been conducted within an arts-based research genre, a criterion of aesthetics is expectable. Indeed, as mentioned in the discussion of utility, some scholars would argue that arts-based studies should be judged, at least in part, on the aesthetic merits of the portrayals.

Yet even when qualitative dissertations are not conducted within an arts-based modality, they often have an aesthetic, sometimes spiritual, quality. We speculate that this quality arises, in part, when meaningful connections are made between the individual and the universal. This is an effect of good art and good inquiry. Furthermore, when the logic of justification is clearly laid out and the resulting portrayals support one another, the integrity of the study can embody a conceptual elegance. Penetrating insights into the essence of the phenomenon under study can also give rise to an aesthetic simplicity.

It is worth making the distinction between aesthetic qualities that are inherent in the portrayals and "artistic" touches that are added for their own sake. As arts-based research has gained momentum, the danger of such "poesy" has become more apparent as novices strive for a cleverness of form at the sacrifice of substance.

Ethics

Throughout this chapter, we have used the adjective *intimate* to connote qualitative studies that are conducted within fairly small or specific contexts. There is, however, another connotation. Living with the study can create a climate of intimacy, breaking down the traditional separation between researcher and subject. In forsaking the ontological stance of "detached, objective observer," interpretive researchers typically enter into relationships that are far from anonymous or impersonal. Indeed, skillful researchers—those with a highly honed sense of self as instrument—are likely to succeed in establishing a bond of trust that invites confidences from participants and thus increases their vulnerability. Within this milieu, researchers may be privy to intimate knowledge about people and organizations that would not ordinarily surface in more empirical studies (Exemplar 7.6). In such murky waters, the ethical precept "Do no harm" takes on a heightened importance.

The dilemmas raised in Exemplar 7.6 suggest that safeguarding the interests of research participants is less a matter of following a prescribed set of specific guidelines and more a matter of the researcher's developing a strong ethical sensibility.

EXEMPLAR 7.6 Ethical Dilemmas and the Need for Ethical Sensibility

Authors' Commentary: The following scenarios were excerpted from an unpublished paper written by a student at the Flinders Institute for the Study of Teaching in South Australia (Prosser, 1998). These scenarios emerged during the course of a critical theory study of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The scenarios illustrate the range of dilemmas that can arise as the researcher lives with the study, as well as the sensitivity needed to recognize potential conflicts of interest and abuses of privilege and power.

One school requested a presentation about the project to the staff outlining my aims and methods. Further, they request notification to all teachers of which students will be absent from each lesson. Most teachers are unaware of who has ADHD in the school. What should I tell them?

In the same school, most students who have agreed to participate keep forgetting to attend interviews, and my schedule is way behind. The school suggests that I go into lessons and remove them. Should I do this?

I discover among my cohort a student who is not diagnosed ADHD but the school believes should be. The student knows nothing about ADHD and struggles to participate. Further, his mother rings to complain about the emphasis on ADHD. What do I do?

I discover three students who have been labeled ADHD by the school, who are on medication "because it helps," but whose parents deny an ADHD diagnosis. It is illegal to be on medication without an ADHD diagnosis. What do I do with this information?

During my time in one school, a journalist approaches me for an interview asking for access to data on geographical distribution of ADHD. As the interview progresses it becomes apparent that she is trying to get the name of a practitioner of whom over-prescription is suspected, and to make a stance on medication use. Even though all my participants are supporters of medication, part of my concern is the medicalisation of ADHD. How do I respond?

A teacher that had been really helpful approached me to tell a story of a friend who was desperate for advice. Her child had been out of control since she was 2, but several psychologists said it was not ADHD. However her school is pushing for a medical diagnosis, and the mother wants to know what help is out there, if I think it is ADHD, and if I could refer her to any good pediatricians? What do I say?

A student in one school calls me professor and is trying to use my supposed authority to convince teachers he should get benefits under the guise of ADHD. What do I do?

The students in one school decide that the media unfairly represent them and they want to make their own documentary. They want to show they are not all out of control. One student wants to take himself off medication and film on videotape the difference between his behavior and teachers' responses in a classroom. How do I approach this?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have argued that generating knowledge from intimate studies is accomplished through the crafting of portrayals. *Portrayal* refers to both the *meanings* to be communicated and the *format* used to represent those meanings.

In a well-conceived, well-written qualitative dissertation, the format and the meanings are inextricable. Also, the portrayal is congruent with the epistemological assumptions of research tradition and the genre guiding the study. At a minimum, qualitative dissertations typically include portrayals of the following:

The phenomenon and context under study. This core portrayal captures in some fixed and stable form/format the essence of the educational phenomenon that lies at the heart of the inquiry.

Salient features of the phenomenon/context. This portrayal emerges from the researcher's analysis or interpretation of the core portrayal. It captures the essential features of the phenomenon under study and connects them to issues in the discourses.

Implications of the salient features. This portrayal conveys the lessons learned from the study as the researcher articulates the implications of the research for various discourse communities.

The inquiry. This refers to the form/format of the entire dissertation document; when taken as a whole, it provides an account of the inquiry from start to finish.

Having provided this broader picture of what is created during the fifth cycle of deliberation, we now turn to more action-oriented issues inherent in the process of living with the study.

Notes

1. When we first began to teach an elective course titled "Interpretive Inquiry," we encountered several students who clearly intended to pursue empirical studies. As we talked about interpretation as a fundamental worldview in which knowledge is constructed, these students exhibited signs of escalating cognitive dissonance. Despite what appeared to be painful confusion, these students insisted that they needed a course on interpretation. Finally, the realization hit us. They were looking for techniques to use when they reached the step in their empirical studies of "interpreting" data. This notion of interpretation is probably more akin to the notion of "discussion of findings" in science-like studies than to the epistemological assumptions of interpretive ways of knowing as presented here. (See also Think Piece #5 for a discussion of interpretation.)

2. For additional information on journaling, see Holly (1989); Janesick (1997, 1998); and Street (1990, 1995).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Living With the Study: Getting to Portrayals

The fifth cycle of deliberation—living with the study—continues from the time the proposal is approved until a completed draft of the dissertation is submitted to the student's committee for formal review. Bringing a qualitative dissertation to fruition entails a movement from the particular and idiosyncratic to the universal, from the concrete to the theoretical, from the situational to the conceptual. Chapter 7 emphasized the centrality of the researcher in this process of making meaning through the crafting of interconnected portrayals. In this chapter, we turn to the more "action-oriented" processes through which qualitative researchers get to the portrayals. These include the following:

- Immersing oneself in the inquiry
- Amassing the stuff of the inquiry
- Slogging through the stuff
- Moving from stable data/texts toward portrayals
- Coming to a conceptual leap
- Exemplars of the movement from stuff to portrayals

As these processes suggest, researchers are "doing" quite a bit during the fifth cycle. Yet these actions are important only insofar as they contribute to the deliberative process of crafting portrayals. It is easy to lose sight of this point as researchers get caught up in the context of the study and as mounds of data accumulate. Throughout the chapter, we try to underscore how the processes of the fifth cycle relate to the final products—the portrayals. Finally, we conclude with some potential task avoidance strategies that can hamper researchers as they struggle through this intensive cycle of the inquiry.

Immersing Oneself in the Inquiry

Purpose of Immersion

A well-conceptualized intent for the dissertation inquiry encompasses a significant educational phenomenon. The phenomenon (be it in the form of an issue, dilemma, problematic, movement, initiative, policy, or practice) is embedded within a particular context. Thus, *immersing oneself in the inquiry* has two inextricable meanings. On one hand, it means immersing oneself in a particular context. On the other hand, it means immersing oneself in the phenomenon under study. Through the process of immersion, the researcher amasses the stuff necessary to generate a core portrayal showcasing the context in relation to the phenomenon and the phenomenon in relation to the context.

The phrase *immersing oneself in the inquiry* connotes a sense of action. Because qualitative research in education has strong roots in sociology and anthropology, this sense of action is often described as "going into the field." Some novices, operating with a simplistic caricature of ethnography, infer that field research entails going to an unfamiliar (perhaps exotic) geographic location and gathering data about that place. But Eisner (1991), in discussing this field-focused feature of qualitative research, cautions against an overly narrow conception of the field as a place:

> Researchers go out into the schools, visit classrooms, and observe teachers, places where humans interact in educational events. The field focus, however, is not limited to places in which humans interact. It also includes the study of inanimate objects such as school architecture, textbooks, classroom arrangement, the design of playgrounds. In short, anything that is related to education is a potential subject matter of qualitative study. (p. 32)

Eisner's point that the field can be more than a geographic location is well taken. Yet novice researchers might infer that the study of inanimate objects is the purpose of their fieldwork. From our perspective, too literal an emphasis on place or object as the subject matter of qualitative study can obscure the phenomenon that underpins the conceptual intent of their inquiry.

Preparing for Immersion

Action-oriented practitioner-researchers sometimes have a difficult time explaining in advance the nature of the experience they will be trying to capture in their study. As "doers," they want to jump into an experience and through reflection figure it out as they go. To some extent, this may be necessary to get a feel for the context, the types of data that are most useful to gather, and the methods for managing the data. There are, however, potential pitfalls with this approach. Novice researchers may erroneously conceive of reflection as randomly jotting

down notes and haphazardly thinking about whatever aspect of the experience catches their attention. This lacks the systematic rigor necessary for crafting authentic portrayals. Furthermore, jumping into a context without some type of plan may be prompted by the naive assumption that the totality of any experience can be captured. Inevitably, the recollection and recording of experience—no matter how extensive—will be selective. Therefore, we suggest that such unstructured immersion be viewed as preliminary preparation to the inquiry (see the discussion of "hanging out," below).

Because educational phenomena are elusive and educational contexts are typically complex and fluid, novice researchers can quickly become disoriented as they immerse themselves in the inquiry. This is the reason we stress the importance of carefully thinking through not only the experiential context of the study but the conceptual context as well. This preparation is another aspect of developing self as instrument. Having a firm grasp of "where" they will be immersed and why that "place" has been chosen allows researchers to resonate more sensitively with what they find in "the field."

The quotation marks in the preceding sentence serve as a reminder that context is not necessarily a geographic location. For example, books and other written artifacts might comprise the context of historical, legal, or policy-related dissertations. For such studies, going into the field might mean going to a repository of documents.

Keeping Focused

For many inquiries, immersion does involve entering an actual setting. Depending upon the student's familiarity with the setting, a host of practical issues may require attention during earlier cycles of deliberation. It goes beyond the purpose and scope of this book to address practical strategies for gaining access to field sites, establishing rapport, gaining trust, and other issues commonly associated with field research. Rather, our focus remains on issues related to self as instrument.

Because context and phenomenon are so closely intertwined, novice researchers run the risk of getting lost in the specific events, activities, relationships, experiences, and so on that comprise the context. When students fashion their dissertation around some aspect of their practice, living with the study often keeps them immersed in their own work. Although this provides a rich context for the inquiry, it also blurs the boundary between practitioner and researcher. This is not necessarily a problem unless unwary practitioners become so enmeshed in concerns of practice that they lose sight of their study. Greta, for example, was studying the educational needs of nursing home administrators at a time when many individuals had moved into these positions with little formal preparation. Repeatedly, Greta found her research interviews turning into mini-consulting sessions as administrators, hungry for information, began to solicit her advice. Greta, being a teacher at heart, and having a strong desire to improve the quality of nursing home administration, found it exceptionally difficult to pull back from these interactions and maintain a focus on her inquiry. It is not as

though the two were mutually exclusive. But without self-discipline, Greta ran the risk of sacrificing her dissertation to the needs of her study participants.

Classroom teachers and school administrators can be especially susceptible to the demands of practice. The immediate needs of students, the ever-present fires to be put out, are tremendously compelling to committed practitioners who are juggling job responsibilities and the dissertation. Thus, for practitioners, living with the study requires due vigilance against becoming mired in the situational aspects of their context. Engaging in all three forms of reflection is an important safeguard. A productive tension arises as researchers recollect the details of the context, resonate introspectively with the potential meanings of those details, and make conceptual connections with the phenomenon under study.

Tuning In to the Context

Whereas some students choose to research an aspect of their own practice, others may prefer to investigate a phenomenon or context with which they are less familiar. The dissertation may provide an opportunity to examine an issue that has always troubled them, explore an arena of practice in anticipation of a career move, or grapple with the demands of a new professional role or position. In such cases, immersing oneself in the inquiry may require what Bill Ayers calls "hanging out." In describing his own experience in writing *A Kind and Just Parent*, Ayers (1997) talks about hanging out in the juvenile justice system for 2 years—listening, watching, talking, and reading. Through hanging out, the researcher develops the sensitivity necessary to understand the significant aspects of the context. Two years is not an unusual length of time to hang out in order to develop the capacity to resonate fully with a previously unfamiliar context/phenomenon.

We hope that this discussion underscores the nature of intellectual work inherent in living with the study. Immersing oneself in the inquiry goes far deeper than a functional task of gathering data. At issue is cultivating a mind-set for "amassing the stuff of the study." In essence, amassing stuff requires the researcher to enter into intensive discourse with the phenomenon under study. The purpose of this discourse—whether it is with people, events, written documents, or nonprint media—is to gain a deeper, richer, more intimate knowledge of the phenomenon as it manifests within a particular context. Resonating with the stuff as it is amassed requires the researcher to deliberate carefully about its meaning in relation to the intent of the study.

Amassing the Stuff of the Inquiry

As indicated throughout the book, we find it distressing when novice researchers see a particular data-gathering technique (e.g., interview, questionnaire) as the defining characteristic of qualitative research. Specific techniques are useful and meaningful only within the broader framework of the inquiry. To fully capture the intricacies of the phenomenon and context under study, a combination of

techniques might be needed. In turn, the range of techniques needed is likely to emerge only as the full scope of the inquiry is laid out in the guiding questions and as the researcher thinks creatively about the sources and types of stuff that can be used to inform his or her thinking.

The Meaning of "Stuff"

In Chapter 5, we introduced, somewhat whimsically, the concept of *stuff* as a generic descriptor for the diverse forms of information that students might use in the course of their qualitative inquiry. By now, readers may be wondering (perhaps with some annoyance), "Why don't they give it up? It's just too cutesy for a serious book on dissertation research." Actually, after considerable thought, we decided to keep the word *stuff* for a number of reasons.

First, it does provide a convenient shorthand for referring to a diverse array of information that researchers may be amassing as they live with the study, such as interviews, conversations, correspondence, cartoons, anecdotes, audio- and videotapes, newspaper clippings, formal documents, fugitive documents, literature, artifacts of practice, and their own journals and memos. During informal conversations about one's study, it is simply more convenient to use the generic descriptor *stuff* than to restate detailed lists of data sets.

Second, stuff seems to strike a chord with students, perhaps demystifying in some small measure the onerous prospect of dealing with *DATA*.

Third, the word stuff helps to counteract the tendency to think of data in rather simplistic and singular terms (e.g., interviews are data; questionnaires are data; formal observations are data). When novice researchers begin to live with the study, a narrow mind-set about data is counterproductive. In essence, it limits the researcher's attention, constricting his or her capacity to resonate with multiple types and sources of data embedded within the context of the study. Consequently, the researcher may not have sufficiently thick data when the time comes to portray the phenomenon under investigation.

The fourth reason for using the word stuff, however, is the most important. Once immersed in the study, researchers are quickly inundated with massive amounts of information. Although they may be conscientiously reflecting on the potential meanings of the information, there is often a prolonged period when nothing seems to make any sense. All of the bits and pieces of information have a disconcerting anonymity. At most, only a few shreds of information may stand out. The rest blend into an undifferentiated mass. At this stage of the inquiry, it seems a bit presumptuous to call this conglomeration "data." The word data implies a certain utility; a conscious awareness on the researcher's part of meaning; and at least a glimmer of how particular pieces of information contribute to some larger, significant aspect of the study. *Stuff*, then, is a precursor to data. It is the raw material of the inquiry. Metaphorically, the context of a study is like a mine shaft—the stuff is the ore extracted from the mine, data are the gold nuggets smelted from the ore, and the portrayal is the object crafted from the gold.

Even as researchers continue to mine the context for more stuff, they are constantly monitoring it for potential meaning. Preliminary attempts at inter-

pretation often bring to the surface unanticipated veins of gold. These, in turn, let the researcher know where to dig further. We use the term *slogging* to describe these early efforts to make sense of the ever-mounting stuff.

The Pack Rat Syndrome

During the early cycles of deliberation, students often collect and/or generate a wide conglomeration of materials that might have potential relevance to their study. One colleague referred to this often intuitive—and necessary—collection process as the pack rat syndrome. At this stage of the inquiry, students are not really sure what information might be useful. Therefore, the tendency is to gather and hoard as much information as possible. This aspect of amassing stuff may occur as researchers hang out, before an intent for the study has come into focus.

The more theoretical sensitivity or wisdom the researcher develops or brings to the inquiry, the better able he or she will be to recognize productive lines of investigation. At some point, the pack rat syndrome does give way to more deliberate and deliberative information-gathering processes. Ideally, these processes have been thought through as researchers crafted the proposal for their study. Yet the subtleties of amassing stuff often come to light as researchers actually live the study. For this reason, we address several important issues in relation to this fifth cycle of deliberation.

Issue: Accessing Relevant Stuff

One important issue in amassing stuff is not only determining what types of information might be useful but whether it can realistically be obtained. For example, a researcher might be very interested in the phenomenon of ethical implications of policy decisions made by a school board. Practical concerns in planning such a study might include whether the researcher would have access to (a) board members, (b) the processes that gave rise to the policies, and (c) the documents that capture the deliberations and the final policy. On one hand, many relevant documents might be matters of public record and therefore accessible. On the other hand, getting at the essence of ethics and policy decisions might require access to behind-the-scenes information where the "real" story can be seen. Without access to such confidential information, the study might not be doable, no matter how compelling it is.

Bonnie Knapp-Minnick (1984), another member of our original study group, faced a slightly different issue in accessing information. She wanted to study stereotypes about why women cannot handle management positions. Early on, she concluded that it would not be possible to ask people directly, "What are your stereotypes about women and management?" Just as physicists must study the location of electrons by tracing their paths, Bonnie pondered how she might capture the telltale signs of stereotypes. As she told people about the idea for her study, she began to notice a recurring response. "Wait till you hear this," people would say. "You aren't going to believe it." This comment would then be followed by an outrageous anecdote of why a particular woman was not considered for

promotion to a management position. Suddenly, it occurred to Bonnie that these "incredible tales" were the very traces of stereotypes that she had been searching for. The challenge then became initiating a process for gathering such tales. Again, going out and asking directly for such stories seemed fruitless. In essence, she had to wait for the tales to come to her. Thus, she portrayed her process as data *accumulation* rather than data *collection*. She told as many friends and colleagues as possible about her interest. Soon, a trickle of tales turned into a constant stream as her interest spread by word of mouth. A year after successfully defending her dissertation, she lamented that her only problem was stopping the flow of tales that still came her way.

Issue: Understanding What the Stuff Represents

A different issue arises when researchers are investigating some aspect of their own practice and have access to a wealth of information. Namely, researchers must sort through what such information represents. We are reminded of two doctoral students whose interest in portfolio making led them to conduct a number of workshops for teachers. Over time, they had accumulated a tremendous cache of artifacts from the workshops—materials they had prepared (e.g., objectives, learning activities, handouts), and materials generated by participants (e.g., journal entries, reflective writing, learning portfolios, flip charts with key discussion points, informal and formal evaluations). Both students were interested in shaping dissertations around the phenomenon of portfolio making. So, a key issue was determining what these workshop artifacts represented. The students tended to see these artifacts as "proof" that their own views of portfolio making were shared by teachers participating in the workshops. However, this use of the artifacts was not supportable, nor would it have been possible to warrant truth claims about the value of portfolios based on an analysis of this information. On the other hand, a great deal of this information could have been used to portray the practice context within which these two students had begun to explore the phenomenon of portfolio making.

When researchers intend to involve a particular group of people in their study, they often imagine collecting demographic information about the participants (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, role, socioeconomic status, and other such "variables"). Moreover, they imagine reporting this information numerically (e.g., the number and percentage of male and female participants, the number and grade of public school students, the number of teachers and principals in a study). Yet because this information will be presented in numeric form, novice researchers wonder, "Can I do a mixed method study?" This is a misleading and unproductive question because the quantitative or qualitative nature of data has nothing to do with "mixing methods." Potentially, any method of qualitative inquiry—any qualitative research genre—might include a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. The method of inquiry guides what type of truth claims can be generated from various mixes of data.

In interpretive studies, numeric data may be very helpful in describing the context of the study. For example, the students who wanted to study portfolio making might have included charts describing the number of workshops conducted, the number of participants per workshop, the gender and professional role of participants, and so on. From such "quantitative" data, they could have warranted the claim, "We have broadened and deepened our own initial thinking about portfolio making through our interactions with professionals in these workshop settings." Furthermore, they could have warranted a claim that "during our interactions with workshop participants, a variety of issues and concerns about portfolio making began to emerge. These issues and concerns include . . ." Such statements could have been used to establish the conceptual context from which their dissertation inquiries emerged. They could not, however, claim that teachers value reflective portfolio making just because a majority of participants gave the workshop very high evaluation ratings. They also could not claim that the workshop was an effective strategy for preparing teachers to initiate portfolio making in their classrooms, even if 100% of the participants had stated an intention to use portfolios as a result of taking the workshop.

Issue: Eliciting Participant Experiences

Repeatedly, students enroll in our Introduction to Qualitative Research course with the express goal of "learning how to do interviews." As we explore what they mean by this, at least two assumptions commonly surface. First is an assumption that there is one right way to do interviews. Second is a concern about making sure they get uniform data from all participants. Both concerns seem to be fueled by vague impressions of objective interviewing procedures drawn from the social sciences.

If the intent of a study is to find reliable, valid, and predictable commonalities among individuals experiencing a certain phenomenon, then highly structured interviews might be entirely appropriate. For example, at our institution, one research center has been conducting large-scale studies of the sociopsychological impact of caring for a family member diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Extensive and detailed protocols have been developed for interviews to be conducted at 6, 12, and 18 months into the caregiving experience. Several graduate students are hired and trained to do the telephone interviews and code the data. They are not expected to deviate from the protocol. If one student leaves, another is hired and trained. It is the questions that are important, and the student research assistants are conduits for relaying the questions, recording the answers, and entering coded data into the computer. The aim of the study is to find predictable correlations between caregiving experiences and caregiver burden. To tease out and warrant significant correlations, a large sample population is needed. In this model, the interviewer needs communication skills that are good enough to establish rapport, secure the interviewees' cooperation, and listen accurately to responses. The notion of self as instrument does not pertain to the research assistants conducting the interviews.

This model of interviewing, grounded in social psychology, may not be appropriate for the intimate inquiries carried out as doctoral dissertations in education. When the intent of a study is to probe deeply into the meanings that participants have made of some experience, then other approaches, such as semistructured, open-ended, or conversational interviews, may be far more productive. Such approaches do not aim to discover or verify commonalities across experience, but rather strive to get at each individual's uniquely lived experience. Interviewers follow where the interviewee leads without losing sight of the phenomenon that they are trying to understand.

For example, Melanie wants to understand how women on welfare view their experience of education—during their public school years and during a special program offered by the community college. The women she plans to interview have successfully made the transition from welfare to financial self-sufficiency. Although on the surface, these women appear to share a number of common characteristics, that is less compelling to Melanie than the individual journey each woman has made.

Similarly, Roberta wants to gain deeper insight into the experiences of couples who must decide whether to undergo genetic testing. These couples are older and are at risk for giving birth to infants with birth defects, but it is not this commonality that is central to the study. Rather, it is the variations of response to this anxiety-producing experience that can yield a range of insights of importance to genetic counselors.

As mentioned at the end of Chapter 7, erasing the barriers between researcher and participant is often necessary to establish a level of trust where individuals are willing to share deeply painful or private information. At the same time, this places study participants in a tremendously vulnerable position, relying on the integrity of the researcher to do no harm with the confidences that have been shared. Achieving the capacity to establish such rapport requires a finely developed sense of self as instrument and also a finely honed ethical sensibility.

Inevitably, this view of eliciting information from participants raises questions about its authenticity. Novices often ask, "If people know what I'm studying, won't they tell me what they think I want to hear?" "How do I know they aren't lying to me or making things up?" "What if their version of what happened doesn't match with other people's versions?" "What if I get a very skewed or limited perspective?"

It is one thing for novice researchers to express a desire to do qualitative research, to understand people's lived experiences, or to give voice to marginalized groups. It is quite another to be inundated with masses of qualitative data and to be haunted by these axiological and ontological questions. There is no simple answer to these issues, but repeatedly, we see students fall into a common epistemological trap. In short, they gather situational data and then use them to comment on the situation itself. In taking this step, the researcher embarks on a quest for correspondence between his or her interpretation and the situation itself. Yet it is unlikely that the data have been gathered in a way that supports truth claims of correspondence. To avoid this trap, researchers must remain focused on the

EXEMPLAR 8.1 Probing the Significance of Qualitative Data

Not long ago, a colleague who edits an educational journal asked Noreen to review a manuscript that had been submitted for publication. The manuscript contained a number of stories from faculty who attributed their difficulty in obtaining tenure to the fact that they did qualitative research. The editor was clearly troubled by the manuscript and kept asking, "But are these stories really true? The manuscript seems so one-sided. Shouldn't the author have tried to present a more balanced perspective? Quite honestly, the whole piece comes across like the author and her informants are just whining."

"What the paper lacks," Noreen responded, "is any kind of conceptual frame. The author has just strung together a series of faculty anecdotes. Then she takes these anecdotes at face value and implies that they 'prove' that qualitative research is frowned upon by the academy."

"Exactly," exclaimed the editor. "Shouldn't she have gone out and looked for stories that give other points of view? Maybe stories from people who had a different experience, to give a more balanced picture."

"If her intent is to verify to what extent faculty are or are not receptive to qualitative research, she certainly needs a much broader and more representative sample. But I don't get the sense that she wanted to do that type of empirical study. She seems to be on the verge of a more interpretive study."

The editor looked puzzled.

"She could have done a couple of things. For example, she doesn't put these stories in a context. There's no indication of her own role, perspective, or experience with the issue of qualitative research and tenure. As readers, we have no idea how broad or narrow her experience base is. She doesn't make it clear how her own experience—or lack of it—may be shaping her interpretations of the anecdotes.

"Also, she doesn't connect these anecdotes to any particular question or issue that she is researching. So, she seems to take the stories at face value rather than using them to provide insight into some broader issue. It leaves me as a reader wondering, 'What's her point in sharing these stories?'

"If she were investigating an issue, then she could have probed beneath the surface meanings of the stories. She could have used them as a starting point for speculations, for raising questions. For example, how do these anecdotes reflect folklore about qualitative research and tenure? Going up for tenure, like doing a dissertation, is a particularly anxiety-producing time. So, she might have connected the anecdotes to larger contextual issues like that. But these connections don't automatically lie in the data. They lie in her ability to draw from her own experience and wisdom to highlight issues that may only be hinted at in the stories.

"The way this is written, she assumes that the statements in and of themselves have significance, rather than serving as exemplars of larger issues. She is interpreting people's statements, rather than using the statements to interpret or illuminate a phenomenon."

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phenomenon under study, interpreting the situational data in relation to the broader contextual or theoretical frame of the inquiry (Exemplar 8.1).

Getting to a coherent portrayal of the phenomenon under study requires researchers to work back and forth between the data being collected and the

purpose of the study. This is a messy process that often feels like trudging knee deep in swampy water. For this reason, we characterize another process in this fifth cycle of deliberation as *slogging through the stuff.*

Slogging Through the Stuff

Much of the discussion in this section seems to focus on practical details of organizing the stuff of the study. On the surface, this is true. Yet beneath the concern for keeping track of information is a more fundamental issue. Because interpretive researchers create meaning from the stuff, it is crucial that they become intimately familiar with it. Thus, systems for handling information at a practical level cannot and should not replace the process of slogging, that is, the process in which the researcher sifts and resifts the ever-mounting mass of stuff.

Managing the Stuff

The issue of managing an ever-mounting mass of information encompasses both practical and theoretical considerations. Without a system, student-researchers can quickly feel as though they are drowning in data. In creating a system, it is wise to build upon one's style of organizing information and to draw upon existing skills. For example, some people "file" material in stacks strewn across every surface of their work space. With unerring instincts, they can delve into the right pile to unearth a desired scrap of paper. Others would go mad with such a chaotic system and need to have well-organized file drawers with neatly labeled folders. It is important to take one's style of conceptualizing into account in developing an information management system for the dissertation. A word of caution for the former style is in order, however. The dissertation may generate more stuff than one is accustomed to managing in unlabeled piles. Thus, some blend between unlabeled stacks and precise folders may be prudent.

In this day and age, it is difficult to imagine a data management system that is anything but computer based. Developing computer literacy and mastering the nuances of new software during the dissertation process add a layer of learning to an already intensive experience. Therefore, becoming conversant with computers as early as possible in one's doctoral program is prudent.

Because software programs are evolving so rapidly, it is pointless for us to review and recommend packages that are currently available. In considering computer hardware and software, however, it is useful to think about several issues related to managing stuff. These issues include the following:

- Cataloguing information
- Managing multiple forms of data
- Analyzing data
- Transforming stuff into a stable record
- Moving from stable data records toward portrayals

Cataloguing Information

A basic consideration in qualitative research is cataloguing the information as it is collected so that the researcher can readily identify its source; the nature of the information (e.g., interview transcript, fugitive document, casual conversation, published document); and where it is stored. It is also useful to note why the researcher thought this information would be useful to the study. Although the relevance of information seems unforgettably obvious at the time it is gathered, its potential significance can fade as data mount.

Developing a system for cataloguing information intersects with another important issue—ensuring the anonymity of study participants. The form used to submit dissertation proposals to our own institution's research review board illustrates several ways in which this issue has traditionally been handled. Students are asked to check off one of the following options:

- No subject identifiers or linkage codes will be recorded with the information.
- All subject identifiers and linkage codes will be irreversibly stripped from the recorded information after it is obtained.
- Linkage codes will be recorded on the information; however, the individual(s) having access to linkage code information is (are) independent of this research project.
- Subject identifiers and/or linkage codes (i.e., accessible to the involved research investigators) will be retained with the information. *Note: To qualify for exempt status; if subject identifiers and/or linkage codes are retained with the information, any disclosure of the subjects' responses to the survey or interview outside of the research cannot reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation* [emphasis in original].

These options are not particularly applicable in qualitative (especially interpretive) research. The first three options, for example, are grounded in a scientific/empirical tradition. This is signaled by the term *subjects,* which tends to objectify individuals who participate in a study. Researchers working in an interpretive mode tend to use descriptors such as *participant, informant, co-inquirer,* or *co-researcher.* A second point is the assumption that the data have meaning apart from the individual who provided it or the researcher who uses it—thus, the press to strip away identifying information and/or to deny the researcher access to the identifying information.

In an interpretive tradition, where information is contextualized, the researcher's thinking is informed by knowing the participants. Still, there is a need to protect them from potentially harmful consequences arising from their participation in the study. Conventional wisdom recommends the use of pseudonyms when referring to individual participants. This really begs the issue, however, because in many instances, the identity of the participant is very obvious from other descriptive details. For example, in a case study of a particular school

district, there will be only one superintendent and a handful of building principals. Changing only the names will do little to preserve anonymity. Yet altering other descriptive details may compromise the authenticity and verisimilitude of the study. These issues are not easily resolved and must be worked through within the guidelines of the institution and principles for the ethical conduct of research.

Managing Multiple Forms of Data

Typically, qualitative researchers draw heavily upon verbal information. Thus, a word processing or data management program that allows the researcher to store, sort, and retrieve large passages of text is essential. The growing interest in arts-based research genres has, however, created additional data management challenges (e.g., storing images of two-and three-dimensional artwork; recording live performances of music, dance, or drama). Fortunately, the technology for digitalizing such nonverbal data is evolving rapidly. Exemplar 8.2 contains a message posted to a list of the American Educational Research Association in early 1998 and illustrates efforts that are under way to make better use of digital data.

Because formal literature can also be a form of data in qualitative studies, a good bibliographic program is invaluable. Such programs should allow researchers to index the content of articles and then to sort and retrieve them based on a variety of parameters (e.g., author, title, key concepts). Also beneficial are bibliographic programs that interface with word processing programs and make it possible to import references as needed into the body of the dissertation and to generate reference lists in a variety of citation styles.

Analyzing Data

When choosing software, it is important to differentiate between programs that manage data and programs that actually do data analysis. The former allow the researcher to store, index, sort, and retrieve data. The latter actually do content analyses. Such programs generally support empirically oriented research in the social sciences. They may or may not be useful for students working in interpretive research genres, particularly arts-based modalities. Therefore, we urge students to talk with faculty and experienced researchers to find out not only what programs they use, but how they use them. If at all possible, novice researchers should see if resources are available in their university's computer support centers so that they can actually try out the software to see if it meets their needs.[1]

Transforming Stuff Into a Stable Record

Another aspect of slogging through the stuff is transforming information from original sources into stable records that the researcher can then examine over time. This is often the most tedious and time-consuming aspect of the entire dissertation. For example, if a primary source of information is an extensive written questionnaire, who will code and enter the data? Can responses be entered on a sheet and optically scanned? If there are responses to open-ended ques-

EXEMPLAR 8.2 Emerging Trends in Digitalizing Nonverbal Data

Performing Arts Data Service (PADS) is a newly created organization that aims to collect and promote the use of digital data resources to support research and teaching in the performing arts: music, film, video, broadcast arts, theatre, and dance.

The Performing Arts Data Service is based in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK and centred upon a unique collaboration between the Department of Theatre, Film & Television Studies and the Department of Music. It is one of a syndicate of five Service Providers appointed by the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) funded by the Joint Information Systems Information Committee (JISC) of the UK's Higher Education Funding Councils.

We are pleased to announce that the results of the first stage of our user survey are now available on the PADS Web site at: http://pads.ahds.ac.uk/survey/Results.html

Executive Summary

Starting in September 1997, the Performing Arts Data Service (PADS) carried out a wide-ranging survey of UK HE departments in performing arts disciplines, aiming to investigate current usage of digital data, identify holdings of data resources, and target services. The high response rate (over 35%) indicates significant interest in this area from the PADS constituency. Respondents report only very limited use of primary networked resources such as time-based media (moving images and sound recordings) in teaching and research. Reasons given include inadequate hardware or network connections, lack of knowledge about available resources, difficulty in searching for useful resources and lack of user experience among the student body. However, secondary resources accessed over the WWW, via CD-ROM or Telnet (e.g., library catalogues and databases), have become relatively familiar reference tools. Some institutions already own collections of digital data and the PADS is encouraged by the high percentage of respondents willing to make those resources available to the scholarly community through the AHDS. One of the clear outcomes of the survey was the need for a better level of information and user education on the potential of electronic resources. PADS has an important role to play here and would also like to collaborate with other agencies to address this need . . .

E-mail posting on Jan. 9, 1997

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tions, who will type these into the computer? If extensive audiotaped interviews are a primary data source, who will transcribe the interviews? If videotapes are made, who will code and catalogue them? If policy documents are a primary data source, how will they be handled? Do copies need to be made? Do they need to be scanned into a computer for analysis?

Procedures for this aspect of managing data have serious implications in terms of cost, time, and rigor of the inquiry. Some students claim that they would never have finished the dissertation had they done this tedious work themselves. Others, however, have done this "drudge" work out of sheer financial necessity. Still others, who could afford to pay a transcriptionist, prefer to do the work

themselves, believing that it adds an important level of discipline to the inquiry. For example, some students erroneously think that they can listen to audiotapes and randomly jot down notes on points that strike them as important. Or, those working with extensive questionnaire data may be inclined to write brief narrative summaries based on their casual impressions rather than doing a systematic analysis. Such casual approaches to data analysis compromise the rigor and integrity of the inquiry. Although it can be extremely tedious, creating stable records allows the researcher to resonate more fully and carefully with the stuff of the inquiry.

As researchers become intimately acquainted with the stuff and with the stable records, some information begins to emerge as more interesting or significant. At this stage of the inquiry, researchers are hard pressed to explain why they are drawn more to some stable records than others. Nevertheless, this intuitive attraction allows the researcher to move closer toward the crafting of portrayals.

Moving From Stable Data/Texts Toward Portrayals

Often, novice researchers mistakenly assume that the stable data records will appear in the dissertation and be read by others. Consequently, they invest a lot of time and energy worrying about the "artfulness" of these records. The bulk of these records, however, is rarely incorporated directly into the dissertation. After all, most dissertation readers would not relish wading through verbatim interview transcripts or extensive computer printouts of data compilations. Often, only a sample or two might be included as an appendix to illustrate the steps that led the researcher to the conceptual "So what?" of the study. For the most part, these stable records are for the researcher's use.

As researchers work on transforming stuff into stable records, they are making decisions not only about *what* to extract from the stuff but also what *form* these records will take. Several years ago, at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, a group of scholars was discussing commonalities among various research traditions. As one supposed commonality after another faded away, one participant finally commented, "Well, if nothing else, we can all agree that we use data." "Not so," countered a number of other participants. Those working in historical, literary, and rhetorical traditions, for example, tend to use the concept of *text* rather than data. (See Think Piece #5 for a further discussion of text and interpretation.) Perhaps this strikes readers as unnecessary nitpicking. During the slogging phase, however, this distinction between data and text becomes important.

Recalling our sports metaphor, what one does with all of the amassed stuff is governed by the "rules" of the ball game in which one is playing. In more empirically oriented studies, the researcher has a greater obligation to display the data in ways that make clear the correspondence between the data, its source, and the phenomenon under study. As an example, interview transcripts might be analyzed for recurring themes, and these recurring themes might be organized and presented in a table or chart prior to interpretation. In such a display, an effort

might be made to cluster the themes based on the data-gathering questions used to elicit information from interviewees, or on questions guiding the inquiry. For example, clustering might be based on gender; a particular role (e.g., teacher, student, administrator, parent); a specific position (e.g., advocate or opponent of a change initiative); or another characteristic.

In more interpretive studies, researchers are likely to create texts that convey a more coherent picture of the phenomenon under study. Depending on the research genre, the text might take the form of personal narrative, fictive stories, conversations, scenarios, visual art, and so on. The "rules" of interpretive research grant the researcher license to create such integrated verbal or nonverbal texts from her or his point of view. The act of interpretation often blurs any distinct correspondence between the raw stuff and the text.

Trying out various forms of data display or creating preliminary texts allows researchers to resonate more deeply and carefully with potential meanings embedded in the stuff they have been collecting. For those working in interpretive research genres, the act of writing is particularly important, for as Richardson (1994) suggests, writing itself is a mode of inquiry. Creating texts is a form of making meaning. Through the act of writing, researchers often come to new insights, and these insights serve to deepen the inquiry by opening up new lines of thinking.

This aspect of living with the study is often disorienting, prolonged, and discouraging. Although transforming stuff into stable records makes the information more manageable, it does not initially alleviate an overwhelming sense of disorientation. The confusion arises, in large part, as elusive images seem to emerge from all of the information and then slip away. One student likened this to the little plastic toys she used to find in boxes of Cracker Jack. Held at one angle, one picture appeared; held at another angle, a second picture appeared. Holding the piece of plastic steady enough for either image to remain fixed for any length of time was virtually impossible. In qualitative research, the shifting images often arise from a figure-ground dilemma. Organized in one way—held at one angle—the data or text forms a figure that stands out against the background. Organized another way, the same data or text recedes into the background, allowing a different figure to emerge. As mentioned in our mosaic metaphor, qualitative data/text can be used to create many different pictures. "Playing" with alternative data displays or text allows researchers to see various possibilities for the final mosaic.

For those who assume that meaning lies in the data, and that somehow all of the data will add up to a significant picture, this aspect of slogging can be particularly maddening. Even for those who knew they would be creating meaning through their interpretations, this prolonged sorting and sifting can be very discouraging. Many members of our study group have described this as a time of darkness, pain, and despair. Nothing seems to make sense. They are wracked with doubts about their intellectual capabilities, the merits of the study, and the possibility of ever finishing the dissertation. In the preface to the book, we likened academic coursework to intellectual sprints and the dissertation to long-distance marathons. Marathoners talk about "hitting a wall," often when they are within a couple of miles from the finish line. The capacity to endure complete

exhaustion, to reach deeper into some unsuspected reservoir of strength, and to persist to the finish contributes to both the integrity and the rigor of the inquiry.

One pitfall that can hamper researchers at this difficult time is an avoidance of writing. Some novices seem to believe that it is a waste of time and effort to start writing before they have figured out the meaning of the data/text. In our experience, it is often through the act of writing that researchers find their way out of the conceptual morass. Writing seems to engage researchers in a level of deliberation that sets the stage for an "aha" moment.

Coming to a Conceptual Leap

During the process of slogging, researchers try out various forms of data analysis and display or the crafting of texts. At issue is far more than a neat or clever organization of the material. Inherent in this conceptual grappling is the process of generating knowledge, of interpreting the phenomenon under study, struggling to create authentic portrayals of those meanings. The aha moment represents a conceptual leap in which the researcher sees the essence of the study and how the pieces fit into a larger, coherent portrayal of the phenomenon under study.

Thus, the fifth cycle of deliberation falls roughly into two phases, punctuated by this pivotal aha moment. Prior to this flash of insight, dominant issues include the following:

- Finding the sources and types of information needed to provide insights into the phenomenon and context of the study
- Transforming this mass of information into coherent, stable records
- Deliberating alone and with others about the meanings embedded within the records

By engaging in these processes, researchers eventually come to an aha moment when the conceptual point of the dissertation comes into focus. This moment of insight allows researchers to concentrate on the intellectual task that dominates the latter half of living with the study: carefully crafting the portrayals that comprise the dissertation document.

Exemplars of the Movement From Stuff to Portrayals

Living with the study begins with immersion in a specific, concrete, idiosyncratic context. Yet novice researchers can become so caught up in the places, people, interactions, events, and artifacts that comprise the context that they lose sight of the phenomenon under investigation. To safeguard against this potential pitfall, researchers must keep an eye on the ultimate goal of this cycle: crafting conceptual portrayals. Thus, the fifth cycle can be characterized as a movement from stuff toward portrayals. The phrase *movement toward* is a reminder that one does

not jump directly from an analysis of stuff to a final portrayal. To illustrate how this movement occurs, let us consider several examples.

As readers may recall from earlier discussions, Pat McMahon was interested in studying the phenomenon of reflection and how reflection might be used to engage students more deeply in their own learning. She chose to study this phenomenon within the context of her own composition classroom. Among the stuff she amassed in an effort to capture the elusive phenomenon of reflection were 65 portfolios created by her composition students, a semester's worth of notes between her and her students, her curriculum plan, and her journal. These were the artifacts of the context; the artifacts through which Pat hoped the phenomenon of reflection would become manifest.

Obviously, this mass of stuff could not be incorporated directly into Pat's dissertation document. During the slogging phase, Pat had to mine this stuff for evidence of reflection. To do this in her head would have been impossible; there was simply too much material. So, she began to create stable records to serve as a base for her deliberations. In the case of the 65 student portfolios, Pat created the stable record by systematically reading each portfolio several times and taking detailed notes. (See Exemplar 8.3 for her description of her note-taking procedures.) The notes created through this process of slogging allowed Pat to bring into clearer focus the issues and dilemmas inherent in cultivating reflection among her students. Still, she faced the dilemma of displaying this information in the dissertation. The notes were no more appropriate or useful to include than were all 65 portfolios.[2] The slogging continued as Pat drafted and redrafted potential texts in an effort to get at significant aspects of reflection. Although none of these interim texts quite captured or conveyed any significant insights, they were essential to move Pat from the stuff toward the aha moment when she realized that students had engaged in four fundamentally different approaches to reflection in order to cope with the ambiguities of the portfolio assignment. Having this light bulb turn on allowed Pat to move into the later phase of living with the study, which involved crafting composite portrayals of the four different approaches to reflection. The notes Pat had taken during the earlier slogging phase allowed her to find and retrieve more readily the bits of stuff that she needed to create rich and informative portrayals.

Like Pat, Lynn Richards chose to study an educational phenomenon—the integration of creative dramatics into an elementary curriculum—within the context of her classroom. To fulfill the intent of her study, Lynn felt that it was crucial to amass stuff throughout an entire school year. Managing the volume and diversity of the artifacts as well as slogging through them for pedagogical insights into creative dramatics was a daunting task. Lynn's explanation of how she approached this task illustrates the discipline required in living one's study. Because this example is rather long, it is included as Case Example 8.1 at the end of this chapter. In reading this example, take note of the thick layering of data upon data and the various data management procedures Lynn used to keep track of an incredibly dense mass of information.

A third example of slogging is drawn from a dissertation completed by Joan Leukhardt in 1983, when qualitative research in education was still in its infancy

EXEMPLAR 8.3 Creating a Stable Data Record

My review of the 65 portfolios consisted of reading each portfolio several times, at the end of which I had filled six legal-size notebooks. The first time I read, I did so quickly, taking very general notes on what each of the portfolios included. This initial reading was my way of getting acquainted with the range of material and writing in those portfolios. There was just so much to absorb, and I didn't know what I was looking for, so I felt it necessary to take many notes on each of the portfolios in order to give myself a stable record of what I had been able to notice.

My second review of the portfolios entailed a much closer reading of my students' work. During this time, my note taking grew much more detailed, as I began to detect general patterns among the portfolios. My note taking in this phase allowed me to keep track of portfolio "families." In other words, I was able to see similarities emerging among the students' work, and I took note of why some of these portfolios looked alike. In addition to recognizing and recording the overall similarities, I also had to record the differences within these portfolio families. In the process of this second reading, I was also able to note which portfolios did not seem to fit in any family or grouping. These portfolios, and there seemed to be many, caused me to take more notes than the others, because I was working to discern a "wholeness" to each of them, and I couldn't at this point. Because I couldn't be sure which information would be relevant, I could not afford to be selective about what I recorded. I wrote as much detail as possible about what was in those portfolios. One of the benefits of note taking at this stage was that it forced me to attend to the detail of what each student had done.

By the third time I read the portfolios, I knew I had to pay even more attention to detail. I had to capture specific moments from each one of the portfolios in my notes. By this I mean I was recording verbatim my students' language as they attended to what they were thinking and feeling about the portfolio requirement as well as how they explained their reasoning for including the material they chose to write about in their portfolios. I found myself highlighting certain statements or passages of writing that would in some way, I thought, enable me to get even more focused.

I had to be extremely vigilant during each of these three readings because I was never sure what material would turn out to be important to my study. My note taking was an absolutely vital part of my dissertation process. It enabled me to see what was in those portfolios and what wasn't, and in the process of recording my notes, I gradually was able to envision the possibilities. By the end of the third round of close reading and note taking, I was able to start thinking about a conceptual framework for my study.

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and the notion of qualitative/interpretive had not yet come into clear focus. As we revisited Joan's account of coming to her portrayal, we are struck by how her work and language foreshadowed what has evolved into a discourse on arts-based educational research.

Joan wanted to understand why gifted female students tended not to take advantage of programs in math and science once they reached adolescence. She decided to investigate this phenomenon within a gifted program at her school called the Experience Excursion. Case Example 8.2 at the end of this chapter contains Joan's account of her thinking process as she tried to come to grips with her sense of what was going on with the 48 female participants in the program. Par-

ticularly noteworthy in Joan's account are four points. First, as a teacher of math and science, Joan came to the dissertation inclined to believe that quantitative data would be informative. Indeed, she drew upon quite a bit of quantitative data in her quest to understand the students. Yet as she resonated with the data and her own experiences with the gifted students, she knew that "the numbers" did not tell the whole story. Second, in one effort to create a manageable stable record, Joan drew upon a framework in the literature on gifted students. Interestingly, this framework fit—sort of—and she was able to draw some meaningful insights from this round of slogging. All too often, we see students who stop at this point, satisfied that they have something to present in the results and conclusions section of the dissertation. Frequently, these students are operating with vague stereotypes of how data are supposed to be analyzed and presented. Joan, however, was not satisfied with what she perceived to be a rather thin and sketchy interpretation. Her persistence in slogging deeper into the data is the third point worth noting. In trusting her own impressions and observations, Joan exemplifies the notions of self as instrument, resonating with the data, and reflection. Fourth, as is so often the case, the final frame for understanding the gifted adolescents came from outside the study, from Joan's knowledge and love of Shakespeare. This illustrates Eisner's (1991) notion of seeing with an enlightened eye and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) notion of theoretical sensitivity/wisdom. It also illustrates the point we made early in this chapter that the meanings derived from the study are not contained in the data *per se*, but rather in what sense the researcher makes of the data.

In describing their experiences of amassing and slogging through the stuff of their studies, Pat, Lynn, and Joan try to convey their early feelings of "being clueless" and their iterative attempts to make sense of their data. Yet these accounts were written from the vantage point of knowing the ending of the dissertation story. Consequently, they may convey a greater sense of confidence and control than Pat, Lynn, and Joan actually experienced when they were deeply immersed in the inquiry. To illustrate what slogging may feel like before the aha moment arrives, we include an e-mail message from Micheline as she is immersed in the phenomenon of educational inclusion (Exemplar 8.4).

In reading this passage, notice two strategies that Micheline uses to keep her bearings, even as she feels lost in the slogging. First, she keeps checking back to her overview, revisiting key concepts in both her statement of intent (i.e., problematizing) and research procedures (i.e., acquisition). Second, she reaches out to the study group and engages in deliberative discourse with other members.

Micheline senses that she is at a critical juncture in living with the study. When some students hit this phase, they withdraw, believing that they must figure everything out by themselves. This withdrawal may be prompted by a dysfunctional notion that "real" researchers generate results on their own, and it would be "cheating" to draw upon insights gained through interaction with others. Withdrawal might also be prompted by a desire to hide a sense of intellectual inadequacy that seems to accompany this phase of the research. Entering into discursive deliberation at this juncture often feels risky. Yet in our experience, it is students' willingness to be vulnerable that helps them to tolerate the ambiguities

EXEMPLAR 8.4 A Glimpse Into the Process of Slogging Through Stuff

Authors' Commentary: In planning her study, *Problematizing Educational Inclusion: A Practice-Based Heuristic Inquiry,* Micheline anticipated having a number of planned and spontaneous encounters with parents, teachers, and administrators. Through "storied conversations," she would try to capture the essence of dilemmas, issues, concerns, and problematics embedded in these encounters. The following e-mail, written when Micheline was in the throes of this data-gathering process, provides a glimpse into the messiness of slogging through the raw materials of the inquiry.

I'm at an interesting point in that I've written several stories and a few pieces in which I have used collections of vignettes that I've pulled out as I've reflected on the transcripts because they seem to hang together for one reason or another.

I have identified at least one dilemma, conflict, or major issue in most of the stories and collections of vignettes. On some I've done a very preliminary first round of interpretation in relation to the identified issue.

What I'm finding is that some of these pieces themselves are beginning to loosely group together, mostly based on some more global literature and theory that speaks to the dilemma, conflict, or major issue that I identified. Which is kind of like a "one-layer-deeper interpretation."

But I'm feeling very scattered and at different points at the same time—i.e., story writing, and first and second layer of interpretation. I still haven't even finished transcribing AERA tapes and a few conversations.

Authors' Commentary: Notice the variety of activities in which Micheline is engaged. She is creating stable data records by transcribing tapes, creating text as she stories conversations, experimenting with various displays of data, and speculating about tentative interpretations/meanings.

Anyway, I feel like I've hit a snag about the notion of problematizing. I went back and looked at the section from my overview in which I describe what I mean by problematizing. While it hangs together with what I'm doing (which feels purely by chance/blind instinct), I feel an uncomfortable dissonance when I see how some others like Popkewitz or even Peshkin use the term.

Tomorrow night I'd like to give the group an idea of where I am and give them a few of the "storied conversations" to take home to read in order to converse with them at a later time about the major issues that I've identified from them. And if there is time, I would find a discussion on the notion of problematizing useful.

Authors' Commentary: Notice how Micheline goes back to the formal discourses, pushing her own thinking by comparing and contrasting her concept of problematizing with that of others.

When I get to feeling insecure I go back and read through parts of my overview document. I think I'm in the transition period between the immersion and realization phases of heuristic inquiry. In the process I think it is referred to as "acquisition," but now

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that I'm here I'm not sure that I like that word to describe it. I feel like I have been on a roll, but I'm beginning to feel the need for reassurance that I'm not off on a very interesting, time-consuming tangent as I am sometimes wont to do.

> *Authors' Commentary:* Notice how Micheline is revisiting the concept of *acquisition,* a key facet of her research procedures. This is a good example of the iterative process at work. Micheline's overview contained her best guess about the meaning of acquisition. Now that she is actually living through this process, she is able to think more deeply about it. Depending upon what insights she comes to, she may go back and revise her explanation of this procedure. It is this type of conceptual fine-tuning that is essential in crafting the portrayal of the inquiry.

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of slogging, forestall premature closure, and avoid overly simplistic interpretations/portrayals.

Slogging and the Fine Art of Task Avoidance

We hope that the three examples in the preceding section illustrate how slogging eventually brings the researcher to an aha moment. This flash of insight, in turn, is a pivotal moment in the fifth cycle of deliberation. It marks the shift in the researcher's energy from amassing stuff and bewildered slogging to focused crafting of the portrayals. Because the aha moment is unpredictable and uncontrollable, and because the researcher is inundated with volumes of stuff, the risk of losing one's bearings is extremely high. Over the years, study group members have exhibited a number of behaviors that have all the hallmarks of procrastination. We flag a few here as a way of raising one final issue, that of pacing oneself through the process of living with the study.

Perhaps because all study group members have been women, the telltale behaviors manifest themselves in unexpected acts of domesticity. We beg our male readers' forbearance and urge them to watch for masculine equivalents.

The very earliest behavior to surface in our awareness was an unaccountable need to clean house. Career women with a self-confessed aversion to dusting, vacuuming, washing windows, and tidying up suddenly found themselves immersed in these homey pursuits. "My house hasn't been this clean since my mother's last visit," one woman reported. "I've been getting up in the middle of the night with an uncontrollable urge to organize my closets," said another. "I know I should be sitting at the computer working on my data," lamented a third, "but I keep drifting toward the basement to find stuff to donate to Goodwill." Our favorite variation on this domestic theme came from a woman who thought she would "knock off" her dissertation during her newborn son's naptime. Two years later, when she finally returned to the dissertation, she was overcome by a need to sew her toddler a Halloween costume. The snapshot of Will in his colorful clown suit is a classic study group artifact, cherished all the more because our friend never again plied a needle through a piece of fabric.

Initially, these activities seemed to be the crassest form of task avoidance. The consistency with which the behaviors recurred, however, began to make us wonder. Did these manual tasks play some important role in the slogging process? Perhaps the need to bring order and neatness to one's external environment made tolerable the hopeless jumble of thoughts and ideas. Perhaps breaks from the grueling efforts of slogging were necessary, but truly fun diversions would offer too seductive an alternative to the confines of one's desk. Perhaps the calming effect of routine tasks allowed for a subliminal reprocessing of information. Over the years, we have come to believe that such activities—within reason—are an essential aspect of doing a qualitative dissertation.

Because cleaning and sewing seem to be so blatantly task avoidant, even the most novice researcher can generally pull back and resume the intellectual work of the inquiry. Yet there are several more subtle forms of task avoidance that can waylay the unwary student. Some students find it very energizing to be out in the field, talking to people, collecting data. It looks like they are right on task and working productively. And so they are, up to a point. When running out to gather more stuff supplants the more demanding task of slogging through what has already been amassed, the researcher is engaged in a sophisticated form of task avoidance. Similarly, when researchers find themselves going to the library to search for the meaning of their data, an alarm should sound. As much as we stress the importance of immersing oneself in the discourses, there comes a time when more reading diverts attention from the painstaking work of grappling with the meaning of one's data. Our Halloween seamstress likened this form of task avoidance to reading cookbooks all afternoon when the dinner guests are scheduled to arrive at 5:00 and no food has been prepared.

Knowing when more data are needed, knowing when it is time to revisit the literature, knowing when it is time to slog yet once again through the stable records, knowing when it is time to write—no matter how crudely conceived the ideas are—these are issues of pacing that novice researchers are hard-pressed to monitor for themselves. We hope that the examples of living with the study brought home an important point. Specifically, there is as much work to do after the aha moment as there is before it. Novices typically do not understand this, and they invest so much time and energy in amassing and managing stuff that they run out of steam just as the most intensive conceptual work must be done.

For this reason, we urge student-researchers to remain engaged in discourse with others who have either been through the process or who are further along in it. Whether this discourse is with one's advisor, other committee members, a study group, or an electronic community, it is extremely helpful to receive feedback from those who understand the course to be run. In closing this discussion, we sound one other warning by returning to Nancy's plight of responding to well-meaning friends and family who ask, "Aren't you done yet?" Living with a qualitative study is a prolonged process. Those who view it as a sprint, rather than a long-distance marathon can offer debilitating advice under the guise of support. Although we do not expect or encourage students to spend more time than is necessary on the inquiry, a major intent in writing this book was to give would-be qualitative researchers a sense of the race they are choosing to run.

Chapter Summary

In skeletal form, the fifth cycle of deliberation entails immersing oneself in the phenomenon and context of the study, amassing as much stuff about the context and phenomenon as possible, creating stable records from the stuff, organizing and displaying the stable records in a way that supports interpretation, analyzing or interpreting the records, theorizing from the interpretations, and portraying the theoretical implications. The cycle falls into two phases punctuated by a pivotal aha moment. Early in the cycle, the emphasis is on amassing sufficiently thick, rich data. "Early" does not so much connote time as it does the rigorous preparation that culminates in a conceptual leap that, in turn, precipitates more intensive and deliberate theorizing. At the heart of theorizing is the crafting and warranting of portrayals as discussed in Chapter 7.

Notes

1. Our own bias is that such programs may have limited utility for interpretive research genres. On one hand, data analysis programs may facilitate the process of slogging through mounds of data. Yet they may lull novice researchers into a sense of false security—especially if researchers rely on the program to reveal the meaning of the data.
2. In creating the portrayal of the overall inquiry, Pat describes her note-taking process. She could have included a sample of these notes as an appendix to illustrate the way in which she resonated with and reflected on the portfolios.
3. The term *construal* as used in Case Example 8.2 was a descriptor we used early on for what we now call portrayals.

CASE EXAMPLE 8.1 Living With the Study: Amassing and Managing Data

Authors' Commentary: The following passage is an excerpt from pages 35-41 of Lynn Richards's dissertation, *Pictures in Our Minds: A Narrative Study of Creative Dramatics as Pedagogy in Elementary Classroom Content Areas.* In this section, she describes how she approached the challenge of capturing a year-long effort to integrate creative dramatics into her pedagogy. Notice the wealth of stuff that Lynn accumulates from multiple sources.

The Data Collection Process

In order to construct a rich and comprehensive narrative which was also consistent with narrative research method, documentation of the students' oral, nonverbal, and written responses to varied curricular topics and drama activities through teacher and student-generated classroom experiences was gathered on a daily basis. Specific attention was given to my initial lesson planning, my subsequent content area instruction, and to the children's interactions with and reactions to the subject area material.

In addition to the weekly written Lesson Plans required by the school district, I maintained a second Lesson Plan book specifically outlining daily Creative Drama activities. These lesson plans detailed the upcoming day's drama activities and outlined which subject area concepts that I anticipated each planned classroom drama process would address. At the end of each school week, I summarized the drama activities which were actually used within our classroom, recorded which drama activities were added or deleted (and why) and delineated the various curricular areas with which drama was integrated.

Ongoing classroom observations and research reflections were recorded through daily writings in my Teacher Journal. This journal was based on field note observations which I had written during the regular school day. . . . The descriptive portion of my field notes was jotted into several small composition notebooks as I observed the children participate in daily drama activities. Depictions of student and teacher dialogue, the physical arrangement of the classroom, the actions of the children, and the general ambiance of each school day were recorded in as much written detail as I could humanly capture.

The reflective portion of the field notes was written after the school day. While reading and rewriting my daily observations into my teaching journal, I speculated on recurring patterns, emerging themes, aspects of classroom relationships, curricular connections, the affective environment, and pedagogical perspectives. The journal writing process allowed me to examine my initial drama planning in more detail, to study the connections of the drama applications with the prescribed district curriculum, and to more fully articulate my thoughts surrounding my classroom teaching and the children's reactions to my content area instruction. I was also able to reflect on our dramatic actions and pedagogic processes over the extended period of time.

The voices of the children are woven throughout this narrative study. I recorded both their verbal responses and nonverbal actions in my field notebooks in as much detail as possible during our daily debriefings. Because of the children's age and the difficulty they have in expressing themselves through extended writing, the children's points of view and narratives about creative drama were also documented through

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semi-weekly audiotaped interviews. All 24 students were audiotaped on individual cassette tapes at least twice during this study process. . . . In order to capture the individual inflections, tonal quality, and nuances of the children's dialogue, I personally transcribed the audiotape interviews and organized them for later review and analysis. . . . The children were encouraged to share their audiotapes within the classroom. Add-on responses and reflections were then solicited through the children's routine "question and comment" conversations with each other.

The children were also asked to interview each other about their participation in creative drama activities. . . . In order to solicit the children's more elaborated thoughts and to provide a forum for those questions which I had noted as I transcribed the children's audiotapes, I decided to also videotape the children in small groups as we listened to and discussed their audiotapes. . . . Each small group discussion was videotaped. During the first few discussions, I simply placed the video camera on its tripod and let it run. Later on, the children took turns running the video camera and focusing in [sort of] on the person who was speaking.

Videotapes of selected drama activities were also incorporated into this study. The simultaneous enactments of the children during various drama activities were recorded on a semi-weekly basis. Most videotaping sessions were predetermined as an integral part of my lesson planning. . . . Factors such as the nature of the drama activity, the daily schedule, video camera accessibility, and the requests of the children also influenced videotaping times. The use of videotape allowed me to study the temporal, nonverbal, and social aspects of the drama activities more systematically. The video camera also allowed me to view myself in my roles of classroom manager, drama leader, and small group discussion participant. In order to compare the children's perceptions of learning with drama, some drama debriefings were simultaneously videotaped as the children viewed the initial videotape of their drama activities on a VCR and commented on their taped drama actions. This gave the children (and myself) the opportunity to view ourselves "in dramatic classroom action." This type of video debriefing provided one basis of comparison of the children's points-of-view about learning and my pedagogical perceptions.

Approximately eighteen hours of videotape were collected by the children and myself over the course of this study. . . . I formatted a general application of Erickson's "Five Stages of Ethnographic Microanalysis of Interaction" to provide a framework for detailed elaboration of my field notes and journal descriptions, to highlight the nuances of nonverbal communications, to define speaking-to-speaker relationships, as well as to become an outside observer of my own actions and teaching behaviors. By following this adapted format, I transcribed sixty-one pages of video commentary and was able to construct detailed narrative portrayals of the creative dramatics process.

I also gathered other modes of student response through the study of varied classroom artifacts. A Learning Log was used as a source of description of the ways in which the children thought about their own subject area learning and their creative drama experiences. The children were encouraged to express their thinking through both illustrations and writings. I also examined the extended writing portions of content area assessments as required through the district's grading policies and "Focused Correction Areas" and documented when and how the children's learning through drama activities was evident.

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Two student teachers, one parent volunteer aide, and two other elementary classroom teachers were asked to observe selected drama activities within our classroom. The selection of the adult observers was primarily based upon mutual compatibility of our teaching/aiding schedules. . . . I audiotaped all five of the adult discussions after each drama observation. . . . Although most adults seemed "nervous" about supplying the "right answers" during our interview, our discussions barely touched on the format for the drama observation protocol. Instead we tended to focus on the observer's perceptions of the children's involvement in the drama activity, the children's verbal discussions of the topics under study, my roles as drama leader and classroom manager, and the learning atmosphere of the classroom as accented through the creative drama process. I transcribed these audiotapes and gave a copy of each transcription to the individual adult. These interviews informed and elaborated my own thinking concerning the direction and situation of my guiding questions within this unfolding study. . . .

Authors' Commentary: Lynn supported this narrative explanation of her data collection procedures with a series of appendixes that detailed questions and protocols that she used to guide the discourse and deliberations with students and other adults.

Data Analysis Procedures

After the data collection was completed, I categorized the gathered materials in several ways so that patterns in my instruction and in the children's interaction with the drama activities could be highlighted. Data that referred to the description of the context and setting were clustered. From my Journal and Lesson Plan book, I constructed a narrative framework through which I could display the data/descriptions of our classroom. I categorized these narratives according to sequences in the classroom drama process, curricular content areas, student perspectives, other educators' perspectives, and my own perspectives as both teacher and as researcher. I addressed the sequences of drama events, pedagogical processes, and classroom changes over time by including the dates of the lesson plans, journal entries, student artifacts, and audio- and videotaping sessions. Consideration of the social structures and the roles and relationships in our classroom are other perspectives which informed my narrative writing and thinking.

I physically sorted and distilled the disparate pieces of data by regrouping various categories of materials to achieve a sense of the whole narrative. . . . Available computer programs for qualitative analysis did not seem to be conducive to the narrative format of this study.

I also extensively referenced selected authors and related research studies to connect my study findings with others' educational experiences. This contextualized my dissertation with a "broader analytical framework" and allowed me to systematically identify key features and relationships within my data. Through a cyclic reading-reflecting-writing process, I was able to analyze my clustered data in a dialectic rather than linear fashion, and to reaggregate some of my initial data categorizations.

CASE EXAMPLE 8.2 Resonating With the Stuff—Self as Instrument—Interim Data Displays

Authors' Commentary: This passage is excerpted from pages 56-62 of a dissertation by Joan Leukhardt, *Students in a Special Program for Gifted Female Adolescents: A Conceptual Case Study for Planning Curriculum.* Although this study was completed in 1983, Joan's description of her struggle to make sense of her data foreshadows many of the issues inherent in arts-based, interpretive research. Joan organized this passage into several subsections which lay out the progression of thinking that brought her to a final aha moment.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS—INTERPRETIVE PROFILES OF GIFTED FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

A. Background Information

My search for a useful way to group the multitude of data on participants was a long and difficult process. In some ways, such as family background and intelligence quotients (IQ), the participants were quite homogenous, and facts can be succinctly stated. They were from white middle-class suburban families with traditional structures: multiple children; mothers as full-time homemakers or in the clerical, nursing, or teaching fields; fathers in the manager/administrator, professional/technical, or craft/shopwork fields. IQ scores ranged from 122 to 148, with only three scores lower than 130; the mean IQ was 135 . . .

After noting that the above characteristics were to be expected in the conservative community and in the school's gifted program, I had the task of sorting the myriad of other details I had gathered in order to discern meaning from them.

B. Two Attempts at Grouping Participants

A logical grouping of students was according to grade levels. That grouping did produce results which showed some similarities among participants within the same grade and some difference between participants in different grades. Those differences along grade-level lines have program implications . . ., but they did not help me determine characteristics which would give a sufficient picture of participants.

I next made an attempt to analyze participants according to their observed orientation toward traditional values. Details emerged from the analysis, but the personalities of the participants did not come alive. My understanding of them as individuals did not increase in meaningful ways, but I did arrive at another recommendation for educational programs . . .

C. High Achievers, Social Leaders, Creatives, and Rebels

Still feeling the need to describe participants more clearly, I grappled with another framework for perceiving gifted students. My and others' experiences in the field of education of the gifted . . . had resulted in a neat way of categorizing gifted students: High Achievers, Social Leaders, Creatives, and Rebels. Using these four examples of gifted students, I find it easy to relate their characteristics to inservice and preservice teachers. Knowing that gifted students range from "the shiny-faced cherub thirsting for knowl-

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edge" to "the sullen, smirking fighter parrying for advantage" helps teachers develop realistic expectations and teaching strategies for each type.

I now hoped I might be able to group the Experience Excursion participants into these rubrics, perhaps adding to the existing profiles by further delineating the characteristics inherent in each behavior type. . . . There were many High Achievers within the group [of study participants]; there were many Social Leaders; there were several Creatives; there were no Rebels. That distribution of the four types of gifted students was not surprising. It has been my experience that the first two categories usually comprise the largest group within our total gifted program, and because the Experience Excursion participants were self-selected, it was unlikely that Rebels would be among those who would join an "establishment" group.

However, I was troubled by the fact that the three types represented within the Experience Excursion did not appear to be exclusive of each other. Although there were participants who fit the distinct definitions, there were many others who fit into two or all three of the categories, such as the cheerleading captain who had a grade point average (GPA) of 4.3, the varsity swimmer who had a GPA of 3.6, and the poet-painter-newspaper editor who had a GPA of 4.2.

Whereas this classification system advanced my thinking in regard to describing the Experience Excursion participants, it proved inadequate by itself. There were other, as yet intangible, qualities which cut across those four behavior types, blurring the lines between them and not giving a clear picture of the participants.

D. Finding a Framework

High Achievers differed from each other in ways I had not yet discerned. I wanted to capture the nuances of their behavior that would give me clues to their unfathomed characteristics. Setting aside the boxes of collages, the rolls of charts, and the stacks of transcripts, forms, and computer printouts, I closed my eyes and created mental pictures of my participants. There was one with a direct gaze, another with a pinched face, another with wide eyes and a ready smile, and a fourth with downcast eyes. Eventually, all 48 paraded before me, projecting images of confidence, competitiveness, innocence or concern.

I began to conceptualize a new model, a second four-factor category system—this one based on evidence of *being* rather than of *behavior*. It appeared that the demeanor I had envisioned for each participant stemmed from some inner quality of each, perhaps her will or motivation. There were differences in the reasons participants achieved well and differences in the reasons participants were active socially. It seemed to me that exploring those differences within a construal[3] derived from the four modes of bearing that I "saw"—certain attitudes, deportment, and carriage—could produce vivid pictures of the participants.

E. Shakespeare's Women

At this point in my thinking, I leapt from my visualization of participants to Shakespeare's characterization of women: there was Portia, self-assured and purposeful; Cordelia, sweet and obedient; Miranda, naive and emotional; Desdemona, self-abasing and fearful.

These character types "clicked" with my overall impressions of the Experience Excursion participants. Their outward signs of motivation seemed to parallel the parts of Portia, Cordelia, Miranda, or Desdemona. I studied my list of participants and was

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encouraged that I could identify most of the students as one of the types. The fit became stronger as I sorted interview transcripts and other documents into the four categories. Profiles of each type emerged: facial expressions, body language, choice of dress, reaction to authorities, interaction with friends, locus of control . . . and interplay with the previously mentioned category system for gifted students. . . . These prototypes—Portia, Cordelia, Miranda, and Desdemona—would provide a meaningful characterization (an educational construal) of the participants and insight into some of their educational needs.

F. Interpretive Profiles of Four Types of Gifted Female Adolescents

The Interpretive Profiles of the four types of gifted female adolescents are given below, divided into two parts. The script, appearing on the left-hand side of the pages, can be used in the classroom to generate discussion and to aid students in self-analysis. The notes on the script for educators, printed as a gloss in the right-hand margin, elaborates on the script with details from the study and with my conclusions as to each type's educational needs.

CHAPTER NINE

Entering Into Public Discourse: The Dissertation Meeting

The sixth cycle of deliberation entails moving the dissertation into the arena of public discourse. This movement begins when the student-researcher circulates the dissertation to his or her committee for formal review. Faculty, as representatives of a broader scholarly community, have an opportunity to judge whether the study is good enough to stand on its own merits and to be entered into the formal, public discourses.

The phrase *judgment of merit* often carries ominous overtones. As one student commented, "The dissertation is the culmination of all the work I've been doing. There's tremendous anxiety. It's terrifying." Often, it seems to us, a recurring image in the dissertation folklore—the defense as an inquisition—can exacerbate normal and expectable anxiety into debilitating terror or dread. Therefore, we begin this chapter by challenging a dysfunctional stereotype of the defense as inquisition, reframing the dissertation meeting as one more iteration in an ongoing process of deliberation. We then explore a complex mix of issues that may influence the nature of candidate-committee deliberations. These include the quality of the dissertation, the congruence of perspectives about the quality, and the role of the dissertation in the candidate's professional life.

With this as a backdrop, we consider several practical issues associated with the sixth cycle. Because each university has specific policies, procedures, customs, and rituals associated with the dissertation meeting and bringing closure to the dissertation process, the points presented in this section of the chapter are not prescriptive. Rather, they are meant to help doctoral candidates know what to anticipate as they wrap up the dissertation. In concluding the chapter, we touch on several issues that can emerge as graduates begin to adjust to life after the dissertation.

Challenging the Stereotype of "Defense as Inquisition"

The Inquisition Image

Embedded in dissertation folklore is an image of the defense as a grueling inquisition aimed at revealing all of the flaws and weaknesses in both the study and the candidate. This trial-by-fire image frames the dissertation defense as one last, arbitrary exercise of faculty power. If the candidate survives this grilling and clears this final hurdle, then she or he is rewarded with the degree. It would be pointless to argue that there are no instances in which the defense has occasioned faculty misuse or abuse of power. But it is even more pointless to cast committee members in the role of "enemy" and assume that they operate with malevolent intent. Such dysfunctional distortions of the dissertation committee's role and responsibility serve only to undermine the deliberative process.

The quality of the dissertation reflects on the candidate, the faculty who worked with the candidate, and the university that grants the doctoral degree. A dissertation that does not meet at least a minimum threshold of acceptable scholarship is a grave disservice to all three. In a sense, the committee's review safeguards the novice scholar from prematurely subjecting his or her work to broader (and probably far more critical) scrutiny.

When candidates have established a deliberative relationship with their committee, the dissertation meeting can be an integral part of an ongoing and evolving process. The defense does not have to be an all-or-nothing test in which the student irrevocably passes or fails. Rather, it can serve as a collective look at the most recent iteration of the evolving inquiry. Granted, by this time, candidates are hoping that this iteration is good enough to bring closure to the dissertation process. But conscientious student-researchers would consider it no favor for their committee to "rubber-stamp" a dissertation before it is ready.

Students caught up in the high drama of the dissertation defense as inquisition seem to assume that they have no say in the decision to schedule the meeting, nor are they privy to what will happen during this mysterious *rite of passage*. Looking at the meeting within the context of ongoing relationships can help to dissipate potentially debilitating anxiety.

Continuity of Process and Relationships

Sometimes, candidates seem to imbue the dissertation "defense" with so much special significance that it is treated as a completely new and isolated event. Remembering that the meeting has evolved from an ongoing process and within a context of established relationships can help candidates to know what to expect. If the relationship with committee members is based on mutual trust and respect, is there any realistic reason to expect a sudden change in demeanor or behavior?

Perhaps some students believe that the ritual of the defense demands a harsh, adversarial stance from committee members. To determine whether this is a realistic concern, candidates can talk with their advisors about the purpose

and tenor of the meeting. In addition, they can attend several dissertation meetings to observe firsthand what happens. Those who act on this latter suggestion are cautioned not to overgeneralize from the events of only one meeting. Each committee probably has its own unique personality, each candidate has a particular history with his or her committee, and each meeting probably unfolds in a different way. A single observation is likely to yield a narrow, and perhaps skewed, perspective. Again, comparing one's observations with one's advisor provides a good check and balance.

We can imagine some students groaning in despair as they read the preceding paragraphs. Reflecting on the relationship with their committee chair or particular committee members may evoke a deep sense of dread if there has been a history of less than satisfactory interactions. We are in no position to second-guess the roots of such relationships. Indeed, some faculty may be extremely difficult to work with. It is regrettable if students have inadvertently or of necessity chosen such faculty to be on their committee, because that detracts from the dissertation experience. Yet in our experience, such "unsatisfactory" interactions arise far less often than the folklore might imply. Our point is to caution candidates against automatically assuming the worst.

Conversely, some students might think, "I've got it made. My chair is a good friend and will get me through this." Counting on "friendship," especially in the case of questionable scholarship, can lead to a rude awakening when committee members seriously critique the dissertation. Such a turn of events could feel like a "betrayal," if students have trivialized the significance of the dissertation and the meeting. For conscientious, responsible faculty, critiquing the dissertation is not about friendship; it is about scholarship.

One other issue is worth flagging at this point. Students should not automatically assume that faculty bring a wealth of experience and wisdom to the dissertation meeting. Junior faculty receive virtually no formal orientation to or preparation for their role as dissertation advisors. As a result, they are likely to draw upon their own limited experience with the dissertation process. Depending upon their satisfaction with the process, they may either try to recreate the experience for their advisees or reject a model that was distasteful. Inexperienced faculty may also be surprised to discover that each university has its own "dissertation culture." Norms assimilated at the institution where they completed their doctoral work may not readily fit into the culture of the university where they embark on their faculty career. This may precipitate a period of readjustment for faculty.

Senior faculty may face a slightly different dilemma. Those schooled in the quantitative or empirical mode of research often sense that guiding a qualitative study is somewhat different. Yet they are not quite sure of where the difference lies. Faculty in this position may be groping to understand how to best help their advisees, even as they are struggling to understand a new epistemological ballpark.

Developing one's own style of guiding the dissertation process and conducting the meeting grows with time and experience. Certainly, our own understanding of the process has deepened as a result of working with a wide range of

students with very different needs and abilities. Serving on committees with other faculty also broadened our appreciation for different styles of advising students and conducting meetings. Again, our best advice to all students is to enter into substantive conversations with committee members about their views of the dissertation. It is hoped that portions of this book can help students frame their concerns in ways that promote productive explorations for everyone involved.

Reframing the Defense

We hope that the preceding discussion helps to dispel the dysfunctional folklore of the dissertation meeting as an inquisition of hapless doctoral candidates. Before leaving this image, however, one other point is worth mentioning. Underlying the trial-by-fire mentality is an assumption that it is the pressure of the dissertation meeting itself that "makes or breaks" the candidate. This suggests that the ultimate criterion for earning the doctoral degree is how well one responds under fire. Perhaps, for some students and faculty, this represents a test of the candidate's capacity for tough discourse and rigorous deliberation. From our perspective, this parodies the real rigors of the dissertation—completing an intellectually sophisticated, conceptually sound inquiry. As mentioned throughout the book, we believe deeply in the transformative power of the dissertation, the journey from student to scholar. In our experience, the transformation occurs incrementally throughout the journey, rather than instantaneously as a result of grilling at the meeting. The ultimate test lies in the scholarship evidenced in the dissertation.

If, as we suggest, the dissertation meeting is not a ritualistic inquisition or trial by fire, how might the nature of deliberation among candidate and committee members be better understood? There is, of course, no simple answer to this question, because the deliberations are shaped by a complex constellation of issues. At the heart of this constellation is the dissertation document itself, providing an account of the inquiry. A core issue, then, is the quality of the dissertation from the committee's and candidate's perspective. Intertwining with this issue is a second issue—what the dissertation process itself represents to candidate and faculty. Both of these are connected with the issue of public discourse, most immediately within the meeting and then over time. The interplay among these issues underpins the deliberations occurring during the dissertation meeting.

Quality of the Dissertation

In Chapter 7, we set forth seven criteria (integrity, verité, rigor, utility, vitality, aesthetics, and ethics) that, from our perspective, constitute the hallmarks of a conceptually sound qualitative dissertation. In our own meetings with candidates, deliberations are shaped in large part by the extent to which the dissertation

provides evidence that the inquiry has met these criteria. Given this, dissertations might fall anywhere along a continuum from unacceptable to exemplary.

Unacceptable Quality

At one end of the continuum is a dissertation with pervasive conceptual flaws. In some instances, gaps may actually exist in the inquiry itself; for example, insufficient data have been collected, analysis of data may have been cursory, interpretations may be facile, or implications may be trivial or perfunctory. In other instances, the inquiry itself may have been adequate, but the portrayal of the inquiry in the dissertation document may call its credibility into question. Although the document does not meet a minimum threshold of acceptability, the exact nature or source of the problems may be elusive. In a sense, scheduling a formal review is premature. Yet the candidate, advisor, and/or committee members may feel a need to meet in order to sort through the troubling aspects of the inquiry/document. Such a meeting might better be planned as a working session rather than an official review.

During such deliberations, the candidate is not a passive spectator awaiting orders on how to fix the flaws. Rather, he or she is an active participant in the deliberations, grappling along with faculty for a clearer vision of what is missing and what needs to be done. What often makes these deliberations so difficult (and frustrating) for all concerned is the inextricable connection between the content of the portrayals and the logic of justification used to generate them. In essence, the conceptual soundness of a qualitative/interpretive dissertation lies in the quality of thinking that the student-researcher brings to bear on the inquiry. "Fixing" the conceptual flaws is not simply a matter of revising portions of the text, but rather of the candidate gaining a new or heightened awareness of where his or her thinking missed the mark. Carol, for example, had never quite grasped the intricate connections between research genre and logic of justification. Consequently, her dissertation draft had all the hallmarks of the Kitchen Sink Syndrome. To "fix" the study, she needed to reframe the inquiry within a particular genre and warrant the portrayals comprising the inquiry through a more coherent logic of justification. Although specific passages in the dissertation could be used to illustrate the problem, merely changing those would not address the deeper structural inconsistencies in the inquiry.

Marginally Acceptable Quality

Less extreme, and more common, are dissertations that hover near the threshold of acceptable scholarship but contain one or more significant flaws. Often, these are more readily resolvable because they arise from more contained problems. The final chapter of Jake's dissertation, for example, had a somewhat rambling discussion of the implications of the study. Committee members suggested including a summary chart that would highlight the implications and thereby make them more readily accessible to readers. The procedural chapter in Ruth's dissertation did not describe how she had obtained a set of documents that were

central to her thesis. In the process of living with the study, Ruth had come to take this piece of information for granted and had forgotten that readers would not automatically understand this aspect of the study. In such situations, committee members are often able to suggest changes to fine-tune unclear aspects of the inquiry or additions to address gaps. Deliberations may call attention to aspects of the study that the candidate is too close to see. Or, exhausted candidates might be reenergized by seeing more specifically what revisions are needed to reach closure. The discussion in these meetings take on more of a "problem-solving" flavor as committee and candidate come to a common agreement on changes that will result in an acceptable document.

Acceptable Quality

When student-researchers have conscientiously engaged in deliberation and discourse throughout the inquiry process, they may come to the dissertation meeting with a document that meets or exceeds the minimum threshold of acceptability. The focus of deliberation in such meetings might take a couple of different turns. On one hand, the deliberations might focus on the meaning of the dissertation to the candidate, exploring what she or he has learned from the inquiry and future plans for pursuing the ideas generated by the study. Committee members who have read the document independently may welcome the opportunity to exchange their reactions with each other as well as with the candidate. To a great extent, such deliberations may serve to affirm what the candidate has come to know or believe as a result of the inquiry.

Over the years, however, we have experienced a slightly different twist on these deliberations. In essence, committee members agree that the dissertation is acceptable as is, but also see the potential for its being exemplary. Deliberation, in these cases, might explore the candidate's interest in taking the document to a more polished and sophisticated level. From our perspective, the difference between an acceptable (or even good) dissertation and an exemplary one often lies in the outermost portrayal; that is, in the account of the overall inquiry. As discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, qualitative dissertations consist of internesting portrayals. Crafting the portrayals is an iterative process in which drafting a descriptive portrayal of the phenomenon/context of the study sets the stage for drafting interpretive and explanatory portrayals. Drafting interpretive and explanatory portrayals, in turn, often provides greater insight into the phenomenon/context under study, thereby allowing the researcher to redraft that portion of the dissertation with greater clarity and verisimilitude. Similarly, once the researcher reaches the end of the inquiry, she or he is likely to have a much firmer grasp of the overall process. It is possible to revise the overarching portrayal to create a more coherent dissertation story.

Yet for several reasons, candidates may not complete this final iteration. They may simply run out of time, energy, or other resources (e.g., money, support systems). Or, the final, residual threads of dysfunctional "scientism" may lead them to believe that a final rewrite is not permissible. The thrust of the committee's deliberations with the candidate might be an exploration of interest or

willingness to turn a good document into an exemplary one. If the candidate chooses not to exercise this option, it is not as though he or she will then fail the defense. For a number of reasons discussed below, this decision may be necessary or appropriate.

Exemplary Dissertation

At times, committees are privileged to receive a dissertation "draft" that is truly exemplary. In our experience, two types of students seem to produce exemplary documents—those with a strong need for conceptual clarity and coherence, and those with an exquisite narrative sensibility. Often, these two attributes come hand in hand. In short, these students seem unable to rest until they can tell a coherent, well-crafted story. For them, the essence of the story is a fully developed conceptual picture that flows seamlessly from concrete lived experience to a significant conceptual "So what?"

Candidates who produce such fine pieces of scholarship might wonder, "What will we talk about for 2 hours?" It is just as likely, however, that they may experience a feeling much like Pat McMahon expressed: "I looked forward to my dissertation meeting. I had done all this work. This was a chance to really discuss it with others. Sure, the adrenaline was flowing; I was psyched for the meeting. But I wouldn't call it fear. I was ready."

Indeed, the committee as well as the candidate is ready for generative discussion. The candidate's work serves as a springboard for discursive deliberation in which all participants can explore the implications of the study and extend their thinking about the phenomenon that has been so insightfully illuminated. Committee members might also suggest avenues for entering the dissertation into the public discourses—not only through its addition to the university's library and dissertation abstracts, but through articles, presentations, or even a monograph/book. Possibilities for further research may also be explored.

Such meetings are a pure pleasure for faculty and represent some of the finest moments of scholarly discourse that the academy offers. More common, however, are meetings in which candidate and committee deliberate together to ensure a document that will hold up to external, scholarly scrutiny. Complications can arise, however, when the candidate and faculty have different perspectives on the quality of the document that is being reviewed.

Congruity of Perspectives About the Quality of the Dissertation

Congruence of Perspective

The preceding discussion is predicated on the notion that the candidate and committee share a common ground for deliberating about the dissertation document. Ideally, the candidate and committee members have congruent assessments of the quality of the dissertation. Or, if they have different perspectives, they all

value discursive deliberation as a way of achieving mutual understanding and, if necessary, reasonable compromises.

When this is the case, candidates, seeing themselves as co-participants in the meeting, are less likely to attribute differences of perspective to faculty power plays or a failure of committee members to "get their act together." Nor is there an expectation that the committee will provide a neat "to-do list" explaining what must be done so that the dissertation will "pass." Students who have cultivated a capacity for discursive deliberation understand that a meeting of the minds can evolve from the discussion. As a result, they can enter into the discussion with an openness to input, a capacity to listen carefully, a willingness to explore the implication of questions and comments, and a readiness to articulate their perspective and the rationale behind that perspective. When committee members come with a similar readiness to explore, the meeting can be highly productive and satisfying, even if the starting point was something less than an acceptable dissertation.

Disparity of Perspectives

Problems tend to arise when faculty see the dissertation as having major flaws, and the candidate believes the document is at least acceptable, if not good. This tends to create a tension from the outset of the meeting. In a worst-case scenario, this can result in a "stalemate," with the committee asking for revisions that the candidate refuses to make. Several factors can fuel such an unfortunate situation. If candidates believe that the dissertation is merely an academic exercise, the request for revisions may be interpreted as an arbitrary hurdle. In essence, candidates with a marginal investment in the dissertation may take the position, "I've jumped through all the hoops you wanted me to. Enough is enough. So approve the dissertation and let me get on with my life." A less extreme variation of this theme can arise if students have little sense of ownership in the inquiry. They see themselves as victims of "not being told the right information" or of not receiving the right help. Help is construed as detailed instructions for completing a task rather than guidance/support for a scholarly way of thinking.

Ironically, an adversarial dynamic can also emerge when students see themselves as highly creative, free-spirited individuals whose talents are misunderstood or unappreciated. In a sense, they put themselves outside (or even above) the discursive process, refusing to compromise their vision of the dissertation document. Here, the student's sense of ownership is so strong that committee members are pushed to take it or leave it. Although we concede that some extraordinarily creative geniuses may produce dissertations that cannot be appreciated or fairly evaluated by faculty, in most cases, this posture serves only to demonstrate the candidate's failure to grasp the significance of discursive deliberation.

Working Toward a Shared Perspective

Fortunately, such extreme mismatches in candidate/committee perspectives are rare. More typical are candidates who do not have a clear sense of their own

work. Having little personal experience from which to draw, these novice researchers lack a context for realistically assessing the merits of what they have produced. We have seen both sides of this coin—one where students think their dissertation is more complete than it actually is, and the other where students underestimate the quality of their work. In either situation, the meeting provides a forum through which candidates may gain a more explicit understanding of how their work meets (or does not meet) the criteria for sound dissertation research. The meeting offers another opportunity for learning what it means to be a researcher and scholar and for judging scholarly products with an enlightened eye.

Another scenario emerges when candidates are well grounded, have an accurate sense of their work, and agree with committee members that the dissertation is adequate but not exceptional. In such cases, extenuating circumstances may come into play as the candidate and/or the committee must decide whether to push for another, more polished draft or settle for what is essentially an "n minus one" version. For example, Magdalena realized that her dissertation would benefit from the revisions being suggested, but not required, by her committee. Yet she had been studying in the United States on a grant from her government. The grant was due to expire, and she was expected to return to her homeland and assume her teaching responsibilities. With some regret, Magdalena decided to let the dissertation stand as written.

Necessary Compromises

Implicit in much of what we have said throughout the book is an assumption that dissertation research can be a compelling part of real life. Yet realistically, we know that at times other real-life circumstances such as Magdalena's necessitate bringing the dissertation process to closure when the document itself is still one draft away from being conceptually complete. The imminent birth of a child, relocation because of a spouse's change of job, or financial exigencies are all examples of situations that may impose a somewhat arbitrary closure on the dissertation. Both the candidate and advisor may know full well that the dissertation could benefit from one final edit to pull all the pieces together. Yet both may need to compromise and live with an acceptable, rather than exemplary, document in the face of such compelling realities.

An exceptionally uncomfortable extenuating circumstance arises occasionally when a committee concludes that the dissertation is as good as it is going to get. Having worked exhaustively (and exhaustedly) to help a candidate understand how the study needs to be strengthened and having seen only marginal improvement over a prolonged period of time, the committee may decide that closure is in order. Some may wonder, "If the work isn't up to par, shouldn't the student fail?" Perhaps in an ideal world or in the purest sense, this is true. Yet circumstances are rarely that uncomplicated, and when students have put forth considerable effort, withholding the degree may not be defensible.

Our intent in laying out these various scenarios is to flag two points. First, congruity or incongruity of perspectives about the quality of the dissertation

helps to shape the nature of committee-candidate deliberations during the meeting. Second, for many reasons, not all completed dissertations are of equal quality. Latching onto the first qualitative dissertation one encounters and assuming that it is a "model" to be emulated is extremely risky. Ongoing deliberation with one's chair and committee members is the best safeguard against this potential pitfall. This latter point leads to another issue that comes into play during the dissertation meeting—faculty and the candidate's views on the relationship between the dissertation and the graduate's future role.

The Role of the Dissertation in the Candidate's Professional Life

Throughout this book, we have challenged the dysfunctional stereotype of the dissertation as merely an academic exercise. This challenge is rooted in our own beliefs about the personal and professional meaning of the dissertation. These beliefs, in turn, are grounded in the experience of doing our own dissertations.

At the time Noreen did her dissertation, qualitative inquiries were not really an option at our university. This was not a matter of deliberate policy but rather a reflection of the prevailing empirical paradigm. Consequently, Noreen engaged in a study of clinical supervision that did not ring true to her own, more interpretive proclivities. Dissatisfied with the end result of her efforts, Noreen often quips, "I wanted the dissertation bound on all four sides before it was put in the library." Naively, she consoled herself with the idea that "nobody reads dissertations anyway." Three years later, much to her chagrin, she began to see her study cited in articles about clinical supervision. "This was mortifying," she explained to the advisees who formed the first dissertation study group. "But I didn't have any help. There was no collaborative deliberation. I was left to work on my own." This dissertation experience gave rise to Noreen's belief in deliberation, her passionate advocacy of interpretive research as a credible option for dissertation research, her commitment to support student learning about interpretive research, and her belief that dissertations have a public presence that cannot and should not be minimized.

Maria, having attended to Noreen's message about the public nature of the dissertation, set out to write a dissertation that could ultimately be published as a book. Her aim was not only to contribute insights into the practice of education in hospitals, but also to promote practice-based research by other hospital-based educators. Although neither of these goals was achieved in a way she had hoped, the methods chapter of Maria's dissertation proved helpful to other students who were grappling with a rationale for qualitative research—in particular, grounded theory. At the time, the concept of logic of justification had not yet entered the discourses on qualitative methods. This was, in essence, what she created as she struggled to understand the legitimacy of her research procedures. From this experience came Maria's passionate belief that grappling with one's

logic of justification fosters a transformation from a vendetta or cheerleading mentality to a posture of deliberative and scholarly curiosity.

Through our encounters with various faculty and students, however, we have come to recognize a range of perspectives about the role of the dissertation in relation to the candidate's professional role. When teaching the introductory course on qualitative research, we encounter students who see no relationship between the dissertation and their professional life outside of the academy. The dissertation may be treated merely as an extra-long paper to be read only by committee members (and perhaps one's spouse or mother). If this view persists, it can translate into a perspective that the quality of the dissertation does not really matter. Deliberations during the dissertation meeting can feel like a tug-of-war as faculty push the candidate to see the public ramifications of a document that the student is treating like a glorified term paper.

In professional schools, some faculty emphasize the role of students as practitioners. Doctoral study serves to enhance professional competence through the acquisition of more sophisticated techniques, skills, and models. Doctoral students, especially those who have already earned a reputation as excellent practitioners, may be seen as contributing in action-oriented arenas of professional practice. The title of "doctor" may open doors and provide such practitioners with access to new arenas where they can strive to effect change. Within this frame, the contribution to scholarly discourses in one's field of study may be seen as less compelling than contributions in one's arena of practice.

Other faculty may view the doctoral degree as an "entrance card" to the academy, assuming that graduates will pursue careers as university faculty. From this perspective, greater weight might be given to a highly theoretical study and to mastering sophisticated research skills. The dissertation allows the candidate to develop in-depth expertise in a concentrated area of study and serves as a training ground where future academicians learn how to guide dissertation research. Committee members, knowing the pressures and requirements for tenure, may judge the dissertation in terms of its potential for spin-off articles suitable for publication in scholarly journals, a substantive foundation for a long-range research agenda, and perhaps a leverage point for acquiring grant funds.

As suggested throughout this book, our own view lies somewhere between these two points. What matters to us is the candidate's evolution as a scholarly practitioner with a demonstrated capacity for discursive deliberation. This view is predicated on the notion that regardless of the professional role or arena that the graduate pursues, a deliberative orientation will serve him or her in good stead. Indeed, as the highest degree in the land, the doctorate carries an expectation that graduates will contribute in writing to the discourses of their field. Students who think, "Once I get through this, I'm never going to write again," overlook the obligation for scholarship inherent in the degree. Ideally, graduates who have developed a capacity for deliberation are better able to build bridges between the world of practice and the world of research.

The point for doctoral candidates to keep in mind is simply that any dissertation committee may be comprised of faculty operating with differing perspectives. Although the differences are not mutually exclusive, they are likely to influence

the concerns that faculty raise during the dissertation meeting. In part, deliberations about the dissertation may include faculty reconciling their different perspectives about the role of the dissertation in the scheme of the candidate's professional development.

The purpose of the preceding discussions has been, first, to dispel the inquisitional image of the dissertation meeting, and second, to suggest a number of issues that influence the deliberative nature of the meeting. With this context in mind, we now turn to several practical considerations that also come into play.

Anticipating Practical Considerations

Scheduling the Meeting

Embedded within the inquisition mentality is an erroneous "ready or not" assumption that candidates have no say about when the dissertation is ready for formal committee review. Typically, however, this is a joint decision of the candidate and his or her advisor. During the latter half of the fifth cycle of deliberation, as the student-researcher sees an end to living with the study, it is possible to begin projecting a date for the dissertation meeting. After the aha moment, candidates seem better able to gauge both the amount of work and the time required to complete a draft of the entire dissertation.

Even so, candidates may get caught in a time warp. On one hand, they may be working feverishly to complete their study in order to meet deadlines for graduation. They may be so engrossed in writing that other deadlines may be overlooked. For example, we have worked with several candidates who scheduled the meeting, assuming that they could give the dissertation to their committee a few days before the meeting. Panic ensued when they discovered that the university requires that the document be available to the university community at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Keeping in mind that submission dates are similar to those for the dissertation proposal can help to forestall such problems in timing. It is also important to anticipate the time required after the meeting to make any final changes prior to submitting the approved dissertation to the university to meet the deadline for graduation. Even minor corrections or revisions can be time consuming.

The sense of time pressure often arises from these logistical concerns rather than from any command performance dictated by the committee. Candidates are encouraged to work closely with their advisors using two key dates as anchor points for establishing a realistic time line. If the candidate hopes to graduate in the same semester that the dissertation is completed, then one nonnegotiable date is the university's deadline for applying for graduation. The other is the desired date for the committee meeting. Working backward and forward from these two dates allows candidates to develop a feasible work schedule. At this stage of the process, preparing the dissertation document for public review is a key aspect of the work to be accomplished.

Preparing the Dissertation Document for Public Review

Scheduling the dissertation meeting entails making a copy of the document available for public review—potentially by any member of the university community. Each university has specific procedures for officially submitting the document that will be discussed at the meeting and for announcing the date, time, and location of the meeting. Students who assume that they can get their document to obliging faculty at the last minute may have overlooked this more public aspect of the dissertation process. The dissertation defense is open to the entire university community, and the formal posting of the dissertation gives interested parties an opportunity to review the document prior to the meeting. Customs surrounding the number of faculty and students who attend dissertations varies among programs. Understanding the customs of one's own program is part of knowing what to anticipate.

Getting the dissertation ready for submission refers to both the form and the conceptual content of the document. A few words serve to highlight issues related to readiness of form. Readiness of content is a bit more complicated.

In terms of the dissertation document itself, a balance must be struck between a document that appears to be a rough draft versus one that appears finished. A document riddled with typographical mistakes or having incomplete or inconsistent citations can come across as intellectually sloppy. In addition, committee members may feel freer to request substantive changes when the document appears to be a work in progress. On the other hand, submitting a highly polished, even professionally bound document can convey an impression that the candidate expects to do no more work on it. Unless such a formal document is required by the university, candidates who take this approach run the risk of incurring additional expense for reprinting and rebinding a document as well as annoying committee members, who may feel constrained about suggesting revisions.

In terms of content, the candidate's dissertation advisor usually has an opportunity to review the document prior to its official distribution to committee members. This provides a checkpoint for catching any major problems or glaring gaps in the document. The candidate and his or her advisor determine when the document is good enough for formal review. Ideally, of course, both the candidate and advisor will feel that the dissertation is ready to move into the public eye of the committee. As discussed above, however, extenuating circumstances may result in a decision to move forward with a rougher draft than the advisor and/or candidate prefers. For example, nonnegotiable graduation deadlines may necessitate scheduling the dissertation meeting a bit earlier than the candidate and/or advisor would prefer. Either or both know that revisions are likely to be needed. Meeting about a less-than-finished document can allow the candidate to address committee concerns while polishing the document. This may save some time, making it possible to meet university deadlines.

A conceptual impasse is another reason for scheduling a committee meeting even though the candidate and/or advisor senses that something is missing. The

conceptual intricacies of well-crafted portrayals often slip in and out of focus—even at this late stage in the process. Sometimes, the candidate is just too close to the inquiry to pull back and see either gaps in the portrayals or places where the portrayals are not quite in focus. Entering into discursive deliberation with the full committee can provide new, more distanced perspectives that help to resolve the impasse. In our own experience, a frequently missing piece is a well-crafted portrayal of the dissertation story. The last vestiges of the science report stereotype may result in a rather sterile account of the research. On more than one occasion, the committee's "permission" for candidates to "put themselves into the study" has finally freed novice researchers to fully embrace an interpretive stance and find their scholarly voice.

In determining whether the dissertation is good enough, the advisor and candidate may also benefit from committee input. Occasionally, we have worked very intensively with a student-researcher who is pushing the edge of an interpretive research genre. Although the logic of justification and portrayals make sense to us, we are not sure how other, less intimately involved committee members might view the dissertation. Scheduling a meeting before the dissertation is completely finished provides a good check and balance, forestalling the possibility of a candidate moving in a direction that would not pass muster with the committee.

More unusual are situations in which student-researchers have resisted our urging to develop deeper, more substantive interpretations and portrayals. From our perspective, more work needs to be done; from the candidate's perspective, the study is good enough. In such cases, full committee input may help to strike a reasonable balance. A few words of elaboration are warranted here. Typically, our standard for qualitative dissertations, particularly interpretive studies, goes beyond good enough or acceptable to meritorious. Because qualitative dissertation research is still relatively new, its credibility as a worthwhile research tradition is still subject to close scrutiny. When qualitative studies are flawed, faculty and established researchers may respond like Dr. P in Exemplar 2.4 (see Chapter 2): "There is no such thing as qualitative research. It is an oxymoron. I cannot believe that a journal would publish an article citing interviews with earthquake survivors who all say 'it was terrible' and call that research!" When more traditional, quantitative dissertations are flawed, the tendency is to attribute the imperfections to a lack in the researcher's skills and abilities rather than to the mode of inquiry. Thus, we tend to believe that qualitative dissertations contribute not only to the field of study but also to the tradition of qualitative inquiry. Our press is to have those contributions reflect as well as possible on the value and merit of such research. In many ways, we are very fortunate, because the culture in our dissertation study group tends to support this standard. Only rarely do we encounter students whose drive to "just finish" may be at the expense of minimally acceptable scholarship. In such cases, formal committee review can be extremely helpful in balancing the goals of the student with public expectations for scholarly work.

One final point about preparing the dissertation for formal committee review is worth mentioning. In the preceding comments, we have stressed the importance

of candidates working closely with their advisors. This is not meant to imply that other committee members see nothing until the advisor approves circulating the document. Student-researchers who value discursive deliberation and who skillfully draw upon the expertise of various committee members are likely to keep everyone apprised of their progress. Yet faculty preferences for involvement at this stage vary. Some committee members want to see work in progress or to receive progress reports. Others prefer to see only the final draft. Checking the preferences of individual committee members is prudent. Regardless of preference, however, at some point the document is ready for formal review. Less formal discussion with individual committee members gives way to collective, discursive deliberation of the dissertation meeting.

Participating in the Dissertation Meeting

Actual procedures for conducting the dissertation meeting are likely to vary, not only among universities but also among faculty. We know some faculty, for example, who tend to approach the meeting somewhat casually, perhaps hoping that this informal manner will allay candidates' anxiety. Others tend to be more formal, marking the significance of this milestone by rituals such as wearing academic robes.

To initiate the discussion, candidates are often asked to give a brief opening statement. Candidates are advised to check with their advisors regarding the expected purpose and length of these remarks. For example, some faculty might want to see if the candidate can give a concise summary of the study. Others might prefer an explanation of what the dissertation means to the candidate. Much has transpired for the candidate since the proposal was reviewed and approved. The account of the inquiry portrayed in the dissertation is formal and geared to a public audience of strangers. The committee, having a more personal connection with the candidate, may welcome some additional insight into what the dissertation experience has meant.

Whatever focus the candidate takes, it is wise to limit these introductory remarks to approximately 10 minutes. The caution we sounded for the proposal meeting holds for the dissertation meeting as well. An extended presentation with an excessive reliance on handouts, overhead transparencies, or slides can actually be off-putting to faculty, who come to the meeting expecting to engage in substantive conversation with the candidate and each other. Irritation can arise if limited meeting time is consumed with a rehash of what faculty have already read.

We have seen candidates use visual aids quite effectively, so we do not mean to imply that such approaches should never be used. One candidate, for example, had studied nonformal education for women in Bangladesh. At the outset of the meeting, she used Microsoft PowerPoint to extend the major theoretical themes embedded in her portrayals. These ideas had occurred to her during the hiatus between submission of the dissertation and the meeting, when she had a breathing space for further reflection. This lull may yield new insights or better ways to articulate points in the dissertation.

As was the case with the proposal, the discussion during the dissertation meeting can evolve in many directions and on many levels. Automatically equating questions or comments with criticisms or fault finding is an impoverished view of the meeting. Certainly, if the candidate and/or committee has concerns about the quality of the inquiry or the document, these will be a major focus of deliberation. If the study has been well done, however, it is likely that the deliberations will be educative as faculty exchange views on various aspects of the study. Some faculty, for example, may comment on the subject of the inquiry, suggesting contributions that the dissertation is making to their particular field of study. Other faculty might be more aware of the dissertation's methodological contribution to the field of qualitative research. Through such exchanges, the faculty have opportunities to extend their thinking in new directions. It is hoped that by understanding the complex mix of issues that influence the committee's deliberations, candidates will be better able to sort out the threads of conversation.

As the meeting draws to a close, candidates and guests are often asked to leave the room, affording the committee members privacy for their final deliberations about the dissertation. Sometimes, candidates take offense at being excluded, interpreting this action as an exercise of faculty power and privilege. It is far more likely that this private committee caucus is a formality, is done at all meetings, or is in the candidate's best interest. Prior to the meeting, committee members had their individual perspectives about the quality of the dissertation. Now, having heard each other's perspectives, they can assess to what extent their individual views are congruent with those of their colleagues and the candidate. The committee chair then has an opportunity to mediate among divergent viewpoints and determine what revisions, if any, the committee expects.

Depending on the quality of the dissertation and the agreements reached by candidate and committee, the meeting may conclude with one of several outcomes. What everyone hopes for, of course, is approval of the dissertation. What everyone dreads is extensive revisions that necessitate another meeting. Typically, at least some revisions will be necessary. Often, committee members approve the document, relying on the chair to oversee the final corrections/revisions. Customs for informing candidates of the committee's decisions vary. If substantial work remains to be done, congratulations may not be in order. If the dissertation has been approved (with or without revision), the title of "doctor" may be conferred by the chair with varying degrees of pomp and circumstance. Some faculty, for example, make a point of taking the candidate around to faculty and introducing the new "Dr. _____."

Bringing Closure to the Dissertation Process

Following the dissertation meeting, candidates may experience a rush of competing emotions: relief or joy that the dissertation has passed muster; disappointment that work still remains to be done; disbelief that it is "really over." In our experience, the full import of the meeting does not immediately sink in.

Having time to debrief the meeting with one's advisor helps candidates process both the explicit outcomes and the more subtle nuances of the deliberation. At a purely practical level, candidates may need to review the revisions that are expected and to settle on a process for completing this work to their advisor's satisfaction. It is likely that candidates may be puzzled by comments that seemed so important during the meeting but played no apparent role in the final judgment of the dissertation.

Naomi stands out as a reminder of the importance of debriefing. The university where Naomi completed her degree has a policy of randomly assigning a faculty member to be an outside reviewer on each dissertation committee. In Naomi's case, this representative of the university-at-large came from a scientific discipline and asked a number of questions during the meeting that were not appropriate to an interpretive study in education. The chair of Naomi's committee felt that Naomi had done an excellent job of responding to the questions without compromising the integrity of her qualitative research genre. At the end of the meeting, the dissertation was approved by the committee, and shortly thereafter, Naomi graduated and returned to her own country. Two years later, during a social visit from her chair, Naomi confessed that she had left the meeting feeling like a complete failure. For 2 years, the specter of the outside reviewer and his questions had haunted her, leaching away any sense of pride and accomplishment that she very much deserved.

On a more positive note, when candidate and advisor have engaged in intensive deliberation throughout the dissertation process, both may welcome a time to sit back and reflect on the journey they have traveled together.

These professional wrap-ups are, of course, accompanied by more personal matters. Often, a priority for candidates is informing family and friends, who have been waiting with bated breath, for the meeting outcomes. Some type of informal celebration may be held to mark the occasion. (More extensive celebrations are typically planned around graduation. Parties, of course, are often the order of the day. Some students intend to treat themselves to an extra-special reward. One advisee, for example, is already planning to spend a week at a premier riding school in England. Another is looking forward to a tour of Australia.)

In a day or two, this initial flurry of postmeeting excitement gives way to the more serious business of finishing the document. Candidates facing substantive revisions may experience a letdown and have difficulty finding the energy to engage in yet one more iteration of deliberation. Even if no major changes have been requested, final clean-up work (e.g., correcting typographical mistakes, double-checking citations and bibliography, final formatting) requires time and attention. Thus, another sense of closure is gained when the dissertation is, at long last, officially submitted to the university. After the public nature of the dissertation meeting and the postmeeting celebrations, this milestone can seem anticlimactic. Noreen still remembers leaving the education building after turning in her dissertation and wondering, "What?! No church bells ringing; no people dancing in the streets?! No fireworks?!"

Entering the Doctoral Community

Public recognition of the candidate's accomplishment occurs during graduation. Sometimes, graduates see little point in attending what may be viewed as a long and perhaps boring ceremony. We strongly urge graduates to attend, because it is during this academic ritual that the individual is formally and officially acknowledged as a member of the doctoral community. The bestowing of the degree and the title of "doctor" marks an official passage and helps graduates assimilate their new identity as scholars.

Chapter Summary/Conclusion

The sixth cycle of deliberation entails moving the dissertation into the arena of public discourse. This movement begins as the student-researcher circulates the dissertation document to committee members, encompasses the dissertation meeting, and continues with the task of wrapping up the dissertation in terms of graduation requirements.

Often, the dissertation meeting or defense is seen as the final destination of a long and, for some, wearisome journey. We know students who arrive at this point and say with relief, "Thank goodness that's over and done with. Now I can get back to my real life." For such students, the sixth cycle of deliberation comes to a definitive end when the final dissertation document is submitted and the doctoral degree is awarded.

Yet we also know students who come to see completion of the dissertation as a significant milestone on a continuing journey. For this group, approval of the dissertation is not so much a matter of closing a door on the past as of opening a door to the future. In these cases, the sixth cycle may shade into subsequent cycles of deliberation. Issues related to deliberation beyond the dissertation are the focus of the next and final chapter of this book.

CHAPTER TEN

Life After Dissertation

We are reminded of a comment frequently made by our colleague, Larry Knolle: "The dissertation should change your life. If it doesn't, it hasn't done its job." We return to this rather sobering pronouncement and consider the question, "What is the nature of these changes?" Although specific changes depend upon the meaning of the dissertation within each individual's unique life circumstances, a sense of disequilibrium often seems to follow completion of the dissertation. This unsettled feeling may persist for weeks, months, or even years.

We still vividly remember our own sense of surprise when life after the dissertation did not suddenly return to normal. Doing the dissertation had irrevocably changed us in ways we had not anticipated and, at the time, could not fully articulate. Consequently, returning to "normal" was not simply a matter of resuming our lives as they had been before the dissertation. As we have journeyed along the postdissertation path with members of our study group, we have begun to suspect that this state of disequilibrium may be fairly common and therefore deserving of attention.

Initially, we attributed this sense of malaise to the effort expended in juggling routine personal and professional demands along with the dissertation. Just the sheer relief of being finished might precipitate an almost pervasive sense of exhaustion or lethargy. Some time might be needed to recoup one's energy.

Beyond this, however, another consideration emerged. When we talked about living with the study, we cautioned that the dissertation has a way of taking over one's life. Normal life activities may be sacrificed as the dissertation demands ever more attention. Hobbies or leisure activities may be the first to go. More mundane chores like shopping, cooking, cleaning, or yard work may receive minimal effort. Time with friends may be reluctantly reduced or put off as one's focus becomes increasingly constricted to the study. After graduation, some of our study group members have described a dawning realization that they were, once again, at liberty to resume these normal pursuits.

Along with rebalancing the personal aspects of one's life, changes may also be occurring on the professional front as well. With the doctoral credential in hand, graduates may seek new positions within their current organization or begin a search for a new role in a new organization. Even those who do not change jobs may experience disequilibrium as they see their professional world

differently and/or colleagues see them differently. Thus, efforts to rebalance one's professional life may also contribute to the sense of being at loose ends.

Even in the process of rebalancing one's personal and professional life, however, a more subtle sense of loss may be operating. For so long, the dissertation has been an ever-looming presence, providing a focal point for organizing one's time and energy. Even when other personal and professional demands temporarily supersede work on the dissertation, this dominating force consumes attention. Graduation, while bringing a welcome release from this obligation, also leaves a void. Those who gave themselves up to the discursive and deliberative nature of the dissertation may experience this void as a loss of meaningful intellectual engagement. Coping with this sense of loss can also be part of regaining a sense of equilibrium.

In this chapter, we explore issues related to these three areas of adjusting to life after dissertation—rebalancing one's personal life, rebalancing one's professional life, and refocusing one's intellectual life.

Rebalancing Personal Life

Throughout the book, we have argued that the researcher's sensibilities lie at the heart of meaningful inquiries. Honing one's self as an instrument of inquiry is crucial to the completion of a quality dissertation, particularly when one is working in the interpretive tradition. Nowhere is this more evident than in the prolonged cycle of living with the study. An extraordinary degree of concentration is needed as one becomes immersed in the phenomenon/context of the study, amasses and slogs through mounds of stuff, struggles toward an aha moment, and crafts well-warranted portrayals. Sustaining this intensity of concentration necessitates not only major blocks of uninterrupted time for deliberation but also freedom from distractions.

Carving out the space for intensive deliberation is not easy for adults who are likely to be running a household, parenting children, maintaining a quality relationship with a spouse or significant other, and supporting friendships. Although it seems crass to characterize commitments to family and friends as distractions, in terms of living with the study, they do divert attention from the inquiry.

Under such circumstances, completing a quality dissertation often entails making difficult choices and uncomfortable compromises. Just recognizing that something has to give in order to finish the dissertation may be tremendously disconcerting for those who believe they can and should "do it all." Those who are highly competent and independent may find it difficult to ask for and accept help. Receiving patience, understanding, and support from one's children, spouse, extended family, and friends may engender conflicting feelings of gratitude and guilt.

Accommodating to these various pressures may occur subtly as the candidate and those closest to him or her slowly make more time and space for the dissertation. By the time the dissertation is finished, unrecognized realignments

may have been forged in relationships, responsibilities, priorities, and the structuring of daily and weekly routines.

Maria often quips, "I forgot how to cook while I was working on my dissertation. For the life of me, I can't remember fixing dinner. I finally agreed that a microwave might be useful. We must have lived on reheated leftovers from the huge meals my mother fixed on the weekends."

More wrenching are decisions that alter long-standing family traditions and rituals. "I'm not hosting Thanksgiving Dinner this year." "I've already told my family I won't be coming for the holidays." "This year we're not going to the beach. The children are really bummed out. But I need the time to write." Even smaller adjustments in family routines can be stressful. "I feel like an absentee parent. As soon as dinner is over, I disappear. There's time for quick 'good nights' and then I'm back to writing."

Upon graduation, those who have made sacrifices and offered support throughout the dissertation process may experience a tremendous sense of both pride and relief. This initial elation, however, may give way to a sense of disorientation as the time and energy allocated to the dissertation are suddenly available for other pursuits. Unexpected tensions can arise as the new graduate and those closest to him or her sort through how this "recaptured" time and energy will be used. Some may have assumed that life would return to a predissertation norm, with everyone picking up the pieces where they had left off. Others may have assumed that the doctorate would launch them into a new lifestyle or status. Neither of these extremes is realistic. Rather, some negotiations and tradeoffs are likely to occur as everyone touched by the dissertation process expresses his or her wishes and needs.

We do not mean to suggest that this period of readjustment must inevitably be troublesome. Our intent is to flag this initial time after the dissertation as an opportunity for reflection. The void left when the dissertation is no longer a dominant presence can be filled in many ways. This may be one of life's rare opportunities to deliberately and deliberatively reassess and rebalance one's priorities, interests, and needs as one moves forward from the dissertation.

Rebalancing Professional Life

Coping With Career Changes

Even as one is adjusting to life after the dissertation in the personal realm, changes are likely to be occurring in one's professional world. Many students enter doctoral programs with the express purpose of earning a degree that will enable them to attain a specific professional goal. Teachers may want to move into administration. Educators in public schools may want to become university faculty. Practitioners may have planned a shift from one field of study to another. Thus, finishing the dissertation can initiate a phase of career transition as graduates are now positioned to actively pursue such goals. The disequilibrium associated with these anticipated changes is probably not disconcerting. Repeatedly,

however, we talk with graduates who experience a sense of disequilibrium that goes deeper than the unsettled and anxious feelings normally associated with a job search.

Virginia, for example, had been an excellent principal in a small Catholic girls' school. Upon completing her dissertation, she accepted a principalship in a suburban public district. Although the substantial increase in salary was welcome, Virginia's primary motivation for changing jobs was to make a contribution in a larger educational arena. Within a few months, the frustrations and stresses of this job resulted in health problems that were severe enough to warrant a medical leave of absence.

Alex's long-standing goal had been to teach at a university. The salary differential between secondary and higher education positions came as a sobering, even shocking, test of Alex's career aspirations. After much soul searching (and careful budget review), Alex decided to accept a university position and considerable reduction of income.

Hazel's reality shock came not in the form of salary but in culture. Hazel completed her doctoral work at a university that was at least gender sensitive, if not genuinely liberal. As the first woman hired to teach in a program of administrative studies at a less cosmopolitan university, she was disconcerted (actually outraged) by her colleagues' assumption that she, as one of the girls, would fetch the coffee for faculty meetings.

Again, our intent is not to paint a gloomy or pessimistic picture. Indeed, we know a number of graduates who go on to make highly exciting and satisfying career moves by changing roles, organizations, or both. Being alert to the possibility of a more disquieting sense of disequilibrium, however, may facilitate rebalancing one's professional life.

Coping With the Perceptions of Others

A variation of professional disequilibrium has come to our attention in more recent years as several study group members have remained in their same role and organization. For these committed teachers, doctoral study had never been a "ticket out of the classroom." Rather, their motivation had been to enrich their knowledge and understanding of teaching. This had raised exciting possibilities from our perspective, especially in light of the calls for teachers to participate more fully in scholarly pursuits (Clark, Moss, et al., 1996; Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995). Disparities between the rhetoric and reality of being what Lynn Richards calls "a doctor in the classroom" can yield a profoundly disturbing disequilibrium.

Kathy Ceroni, for example, related a small but rather telling anecdote indicating that teachers achieving the status of doctor are not even acknowledged, let alone valued, by her school district. At an open house to mark the start of the new school year, a program was prepared listing all of the district's personnel. Whereas the superintendent's doctoral title was listed, the academic credentials of the district's three teachers who also hold doctorates were omitted. Perhaps

this was simply a clerical oversight; we suspect that it signals a deeper lack of recognition and respect.

Such small slights might seem rather innocuous. At times, the lack of recognition for one's accomplishments can even be amusing, as in the anecdote from Lynn Richards recounted in Exemplar 10.1.

A darker, more pernicious form of devaluing comes through in the following excerpt from a think piece that Lynn wrote called "Is There a Doctor in the Classroom?":

> As a bargaining member of the Pennsylvania State Educational Association, I completed my Doctoral Degree in the last year of a contract that fortuitously included a Doctoral column on the salary schedule. This meant that I was entitled to a three thousand dollar increase in my yearly salary. That salary increase was a cause of consternation during the next round of negotiations as the Doctoral column was eliminated from the proposed new contract and would have required that I pay back thousands of dollars to the district each year. Some of my colleagues were sympathetic to my "holding an earned doctoral degree" dilemma while others clearly resented the fact that my "portion of the pot" might impact on their salaries. "Why should we pay for her degree?" they implied.
>
> The attitude that I had overstepped the boundaries of the elementary classroom and that I was no longer "one of them" revealed itself through other avenues as well. My elementary school building has a Building Fund whose stated purpose is: "To acknowledge staff members and their immediate families in times of joy and sorrow." Events which are outlined in the Fund to be "acknowledged" include weddings, births, deaths, surgery, Secretary's Day, Christmas gifts (for secretaries, support staff and principal), P.T.O. Chairs and Retirements.
>
> The "event" of completing a doctoral degree is not covered in the guidelines (perhaps I should have seemed more "joyous"), so a vote was cast and the majority ruled that no funds were to be expended as "that degree was something that she wanted to do" (perhaps becoming a parent isn't?). Later on, my closer building team mates revealed their fury at "educators refusing to celebrate an educational doctoral degree." In retrospect, I wonder if people in the building could have better understood my "retirement" from the classroom to teach elsewhere than my remaining as a doctor in one of their classrooms.

We hope that these anecdotes represent isolated incidents rather than a widespread attitude toward classroom teachers who "overstep their place." Interestingly, Kathy and Lynn are now collaborating on a study to investigate the experiences of doctors in the classroom.

Our intent is not to burst anyone's vision of finishing the doctorate and "living happily ever after." We include these stories to illustrate a potential source of disequilibrium in the professional realm: Holding a doctorate may alter the ways in which one is seen and treated by one's colleagues. Responding to these altered

EXEMPLAR 10.1 Where Is That Dr. Richards Anyway? Or, Not a Doctor in Sight

On the first day of this school year, I was welcoming my new class of second graders at our classroom doorway. As I mentally matched each young face with the previous year's school pictures, which I had carefully studied on their official office files, one sweet, freckled-faced brunette handed me a legal-sized envelope. In her best first-day-of-school printing, she had carefully penciled, "Dr. Richards." "Why *thank you!*" I said to her in my friendliest elementary teacher voice. "So, you're Haley. Your cubbie and desk are right over here." Distracted by other newly arriving children, I held onto the envelope as I greeted and seated other apprehensive-looking young children. As I walked by Haley's desk, her hand shot up as she simultaneously gestured toward the envelope I still carried. "That's for Dr. Richards," she reiterated. Looking toward a timid face in the doorway, I replied absently, "I know, Hon. I'll read it as soon as I have a chance." Not to be deterred, Haley's small hand once again surfaced. "You know that letter I gave you?" she persisted. "Uh huh," I said, beginning to wonder if my middle-aged patience would last the day, much less the school year. "Well, it's for *Dr.* Richards." "I *know*, you told me before," I replied with some emphasis. "Well," said Haley with a puzzled and pained expression, "do you know where *he* is?"

I hesitated only a second and then burst into a laugh, "Oh—*I'm* Dr. Richards, did you think that I would be a man?" "Well, yeah," she answered, nonplussed. "Then I guess it's OK—you can read it now." Inside, she had printed:

Dear Dr. Richards

I am looking fored to se you from

Haley

XO XOX

At Sharing Time later that day, I asked the children if they knew why I was called "doctor." A handsome little towhead, who had obviously discussed this titled teacher phenomenon with his parents, volunteered, "Because you went to school longer than any other teachers in this school!" I asked Haley if she minded if I shared our "morning mix-up" with the class. She was quite good-natured about the joke on herself and willingly reiterated her version of our initial encounter. I asked how many others thought I would be a man because "Dr." was written at the top of our classroom roster. About 7 out of 21 hands were raised.

The next day, Haley brought me a lengthier note and a drawing. It read:

This is about 2nd grade by Haley. I wok up very very early and then I got dresed sould I go to scool or sould a not. and then I wot up to the busstop and then it sprisd me my Best frend cam running to me. and sprisding me ugen I thot DR. Richards was a man. and I met this litte grel named Kelly. and I got yoos to it and I like my clas.

I like my class, too, and that is definitely one of the benefits of staying a doctor in the elementary classroom!

perceptions of others may not always be easy. In part, it calls for an integration of doctoral status into one's identity. Noreen's advice to new graduates is, "You have earned the highest degree in the land. Wear the title of doctor proudly." This is not meant as a suggestion to flaunt the title in self-serving or self-aggrandizing ways. Rather, it encourages graduates to recognize and internalize their accomplishments as scholars. The postdissertation reflections of Pat McMahon, Kathy Ceroni, Lynn Richards, and Marilyn Llewellyn provide insight into the complexity of integrating this sense of scholar into one's image.

Internalizing One's Identity as Scholar

During a conversation about life after the dissertation, Pat commented, almost off-handedly, "I don't really feel like a scholar." This comment came as a shock. For us, Pat's dissertation represented a turning point in the evolution of our own understanding of qualitative research, bringing into the foreground the power of personal narrative as a mode of research During her dissertation meeting, one committee member repeatedly referred to Pat's dissertation as "stunning," and all committee members approved the document without revision. It was a masterful piece of scholarship, and in many ways, the quality and credibility of Pat's dissertation gave us the confidence to work with other study group members as they shaped more explicitly narrative inquiries. Because our perception of Pat's scholarly ability and contributions did not, apparently, match hers, we pursued this issue further. As Pat explained,

> I'm not sure. I guess I had in mind sort of a stereotype of scholars and scholarly research. What I did for my dissertation didn't match that image. Since finishing my dissertation, I've become very excited about arts-based educational research and story as a form of knowledge. Looking back, I think the dissertation helped to bring out my artistic side. The work I've been doing since then has strengthened this sense of myself as an artist. This didn't match with my stereotype of traditional academic scholars. But now, I've begun to see more clearly how my natural inclination to reconstruct experience through stories is a form of inquiry. This has helped me to integrate these two sides of myself, the storyteller and the researcher, into my sense of being a scholar.

Pat's comments raise three important issues. First, completing the dissertation or receiving the degree does not magically transform one's sense of self. It is not as though one day a person isn't a scholar and the next day he or she is. Rather, it is an evolutionary process that is likely to begin with the dissertation and is just as likely to continue well beyond graduation. Second, gaining some distance from the dissertation experience affords new opportunities for deliberation. From a different vantage point, perspectives can emerge that might have been lost when one is "in the thick" of the dissertation. The third issue is not as apparent but relates to the importance of discourse communities.

Coinciding with Pat's work on her dissertation was an increasingly robust discourse on the role of story, storying experience, and narrative in educational research. But there was no clearly identified discourse community with which Pat could connect. In short, it is difficult to see oneself as a member of a scholarly community when such a community does not exist. This changed a couple of years later when a group of artistically inclined scholars began to coalesce within the American Educational Research Association. Now officially established as a special interest group on arts-based educational research, this AERA discourse community provides a forum for deliberating about the interconnections between art and inquiry.

Kathy Ceroni's postdissertation deliberations offer additional insights into internalizing a scholarly identity. For us, Kathy's dissertation raised important and thorny epistemological questions, questions with which we have been able to grapple far more cogently because of her work. Even the committee member who most vigorously challenged the highly personal quality of Kathy's dissertation came to a clearer understanding and greater openness toward interpretive inquiry because of her carefully crafted logic of justification. Yet Kathy periodically comments,

> I didn't really understand a lot of the implications of my study at the time. When I hear you talk about it, I think, "Wow, did I really do that?" It's strange, but you saw more in my study at the time than I did. I feel like I'm just beginning to understand what I did with the dissertation. How could that be?

While richly evocative dissertations often allow outsiders to gain different insights from those of the researcher, Kathy's postdissertation reflections suggest that something far more complicated was taking place.

For Kathy, the dissertation brought to the surface previously unnamed and unfaced fears. The deliberations of her dissertation inquiry led to a profound yet disturbing transformation in Kathy's understanding of herself in the world. As she wrote in the final chapter of her dissertation,

> The journey I have taken as I have engaged in this study has been a journey into self. It is a journey that has brought me to a place where I feel compelled to pause and reflect on the contradictions and dilemmas inherent in my life as a teacher and as a female. It has been a solitary journey, as journeys into self tend to be, but I have not experienced loneliness. For along the way I have met and engaged with others, who like me, are struggling to deal with the complexities of their work and struggling to give voice to those complexities. . . .
>
> The journey has been painful, and the wisdom I have come to is a bitter wisdom, yet paradoxically, it has liberated me from the technocratic mindlessness that imbues our culture, and it is, therefore, a cause for celebration. Through study and reflection I have come to "see" and develop an understanding not only of the ways in which the dominant

> ideology functions to oppress my class and gender, but also of the ways in which I have acted in complicity with the very forces I am struggling to combat. . . .
>
> To entertain this reconceptualized view has involved a degree of intellectual risk-taking, creating in me a sense of fear analogous to the experience of finding oneself swimming in waters of unknown depth. (Ceroni, 1995, pp. 227-228)

Swimming in waters of unknown depth can be both frightening and disorienting. For some scholars like Kathy, completion of the dissertation may precipitate a period of more introspective reflection. Our encouraging Kathy to write articles and to submit proposals for presentations would have focused her attention outward. As the reflection in Exemplar 10.2 illustrates, Kathy had a far deeper need to find a renewed sense of grounding and direction for her deliberations.

We find it interesting that the concept of *voice* plays a pivotal role in giving Kathy a renewed direction for her deliberations and writing. As Kathy became immersed in her dissertation, she was exquisitely tuned to nuances of voice and stance. These served, in fact, as key structural elements for the layers of portrayals that comprise her dissertation. What appeared externally to be a hiatus from scholarly endeavors was, for Kathy, a time in which the lessons learned from the dissertation could incubate. Kathy is now ready to claim a more overtly feminist stance and voice, something she did not feel prepared to do during the dissertation. This has, in turn, allowed her scholarly self to reemerge from the background.

Each time we give students in the introductory course on qualitative research an opportunity to review completed dissertations, Lynn Richards's document evokes tremendous interest. She has served as an inspiration and model for other classroom teachers who suddenly see the possibility of crafting dissertations around their own pedagogy. Yet Lynn, too, expresses inner doubts as this excerpt from "Is There a Doctor in the Classroom?" illustrates:

> One of the professional devils that I am currently contemplating was foreshadowed in my dissertation. Although I have completed a study of the infusion of the creative dramatics process within all the elementary classroom content areas of the district, I find that I use the informal drama process less frequently than during previous years and that I am at a loss to explain why this is so since I value classroom drama highly as a personalized and "dynamic, fluid and continuous elementary classroom curriculum," and "perceive drama as an integral component of teaching, of learning, and of knowing" (Richards, 1996, p. 264). Deep inside, I feel like a pedagogical charlatan who fraudulently continues to use the title of Doctor of Education and who deliberately conceals her lack of scholarly impetus at home, at school, and within the study group conversations.

Lynn's comments evoke an interesting point about one's sense of scholarship. The intensity of an interpretive dissertation inquiry engenders an acute

EXEMPLAR 10.2 A Search for New Direction

When I actually finished writing my dissertation, I felt *tired*—fatigued might be a more accurate word—the kind of fatigue a traveler would feel when she comes to the end of an arduous journey. But the spent feelings I experienced did not give me peace. At first, I thought this was just because the knowledge I had come to was a *bitter wisdom*, one that called upon me to abandon my former beliefs and accept a disempowering view of teacher professionalism, one that forced me to recognize and accept that I had been, as White and White (1986) describe it, "blinkered," and because of being blinkered, I had deceived myself by allowing myself to be deceived. This confrontation was not celebratory. In the last section of my final chapter, which was subtitled "Reconciling the Grief," I wrote,

> Reflecting on the dilemmas of my life as a female teacher in the modern world has afforded me both pleasure and pain. As I have made discoveries and connections through the process of reflection, I have felt a sense of intellectual energy and creativity that has been exhilarating, yet paradoxically, I have also experienced paralyzing feelings of melancholy, alienation and ambivalence. (Ceroni, 1995, p. 230)

The negative feelings I describe in this section stayed with me for a long time, because I "knew" that what I had confronted was much bigger, deeper, broader than the boundaries of my study. And the mystery around those bigger, deeper, broader boundaries frightened me. I did not know how to live, how to act on the knowledge I had gained because there were still "places" I had not yet traversed. I think now I can find those places in feminist theory. Dimen (1989) tells us,

> Perhaps the missing conceptual link in feminist theory is an engaged personal voice, saturated with feelings, values, and political protest, a voice such as emerges in feminist biography in which subject engages with subject. But this politics of autobiography and biography should *not replace* the received patriarchal voice; rather, it should *juxtapose* it. The point is to use the different powers of both voices to generate a sense of opposition, difference, creative tension. The resultant third voice, retaining the personal power of the first and intersubjectivity of the second, might thereby open a window on as yet unimagined, ungendered possibilities of speaking, knowing, and living. (p. 35)

For the first time since finishing my dissertation, I feel a sense of direction, that autobiography in this "third voice" could be a way for me to resume my journey, carrying with me the knowledge I have come to in my dissertation while at the same time providing me with a hope in the possibility of speaking, knowing, and living authentically in the world.

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awareness of scholarly engagement. By comparison, the demands of routine teaching may seem unscholarly. However, since completing her dissertation, Lynn has co-taught a university course on creative dramatics; submitted articles for publication; written instructional materials; presented a workshop on creative

dramatics for teachers in Bosnia; participated in a special project on the art of Bosnian children; and presented her research experience to other graduate students, faithfully attending study group meetings, carefully reading and commenting on the evolving dissertations of other study group members, and, most recently, collaborating with Kathy on an emerging research project. This, it seems to us, is no trivial manifestation of Lynn's commitment to scholarship, especially because she, as an elementary teacher, is under absolutely no mandate to engage in these activities.

Throughout the book, we have alluded to the transformative power of the dissertation. From our vantage point, this transformative potential is affirmed when we contrast the Pat, Kathy, and Lynn we first met with the Dr. McMahon, Dr. Ceroni, and Dr. Richards who completed such exemplary dissertations. Yet their ongoing struggle to claim a well-deserved identity as scholar reminds us of the complexity of this transformation. It would be easy to explain away the discrepancy simply as their having few points of reference for judging the caliber of their own accomplishments. Or, in Kathy's and Lynn's case, we could fault the lack of organizational affirmation or valuing of their scholarly abilities. Yet these speculations seem too facile. We have come to a deeper appreciation of the subtleties and intricacies of the transformation. A postdissertation reflection by Marilyn Llewellyn (Exemplar 10.3) echoes the sense of genuine humility exhibited by Pat, Kathy, Lynn, and other study group members.

Perhaps when student-researchers look as carefully and deeply into themselves and their practice as these young scholars have done, it brings one not to a place of prideful knowing, but of respectful—and humble—questioning. This speculation leads to our consideration of another aspect of disequilibrium—the intellectual void that occurs once the dissertation is completed.

Refocusing One's Intellectual Life

A Loss of Focus

Conventional wisdom holds that the dissertation creates a foundation upon which one can build an ongoing research agenda. Indeed, one colleague, Helen Hazi, described exactly this outgrowth of her dissertation work:

> The dissertation was such an exciting time of learning for me. It became the basis for a career of research and for a process of continuous learning. As a university professor, research has been my vehicle for promotion and national recognition. I was able to build upon both the topic and design of my dissertation to continue a law and policy focus in my writing, teaching, and service. Doing research has also become the way that I now learn. The topics that I write on are those that I want to learn most about. Not only was the dissertation a time to learn skills and to discover new knowledge, but it was also a transformative experience that is still an important part of my professional life.

EXEMPLAR 10.3 Interior Transformations

As I approached the completion of my doctoral work, some persons advised me that life would be very different after I finished the dissertation. Others warned me to be prepared for the postdoctoral depression that would set in after I finished writing my dissertation. Although neither of these things happened as predicted, I have often wondered since finishing my degree, "What happens now? Will I ever find the time to engage in such an intense inquiry again? Will I ever write again? Where will I find the time?" My response to these ever-nagging questions is that I must continue to engage in the deliberative process and make the time for this in my life. I addressed aspects of this in the final chapter of my Project Demonstrating Excellence (dissertation), where I reveal what happened to me through engaging in my study and the transformative aspects that the deliberative inquiry process brought for me. Perhaps one of the most significant revelations for me has been that engaging in this process is not a one-time event. Rather, it is a way of being and living in the world.

My inquiry focused on spirituality, pedagogy, and education. In my writing, I articulated a personal understanding of spirituality as pedagogy and portrayed the transformative possibilities in being and learning together in such a way as to make them accessible to other educators interested in spirituality as pedagogy. My hope was to further the conversation related to spirituality and education within curriculum-theorizing discourses and to contribute to the field of curriculum studies.

The process of writing the Project Demonstrating Excellence was an integral part of my personal journey toward a fuller understanding of myself as an educator. Through this inquiry process, I learned about dimensions of my "self" that I might not otherwise have come to know and understand. This understanding has directed me to dwell in this world with more integrity. Richard Palmer (1969) describes Heidegger's conception of understanding as the "power to grasp one's own possibilities for being, within the context of the lifeworld in which one exists" (p. 131). Engaging in this inquiry process was significant in the lifelong journey toward wholeness and selfhood, and my coming to terms with spirituality as pedagogy was pivotal in my ongoing transformation as an educator. Through conversation with other persons, the text of my life, and various discourse communities, spaces were opened up that shaped new understandings of spirituality, education, and pedagogy. I am no longer the same person that I was when I began the study. Through active engagement about the meaning of my life as a human being and who I am as an educator, I experienced a renewed integration of self and a recovery of the power of the spiritual in my life.

Through engaging in deliberative inquiry, I was able to enter into significant life experiences and arrive at new textures of meaning. I came to see the writing of my Project Demonstrating Excellence as an epiphany in my journey toward deeper awareness of myself. I experienced a great deal of vulnerability in committing to my study because of not knowing where my questions would lead me. As Gadamer says,

> To question genuinely means to "place in the open" because the answer is not yet determined. Consequently, a rhetorical question is not a true question, for there is no genuine questioning when the thing spoken of is never really "questioned." In order to be able to question one must will to know, and that means, however, to know that you do not know. When one knows he does not know, and when he does not therefore through method assume that he only needs to

continued

> understand more thoroughly in the way he already understands, then he acquires that structure of openness characterizing authentic questioning. (Palmer, 1969 p. 198)

This study began with a question, one that required self-inquiry. Through the study, I came to clearer understandings of the ways that my spirituality shaped my pedagogy. I believe that I engaged in authentic questioning in this study that invited me into a more authentic way of seeing myself as a teacher and opportunities for new ways of being. In the process, I was shaped by the story that I wrote. Ultimately, I was graced with a renewed desire and commitment to continue to struggle, to live, and to teach authentically.

My own transformation was central to the inquiry process. Through the study, I came to clearer understandings of the ways that my spirituality shaped my pedagogy. My study brought me to a deep awareness of how language shapes meaning. I became mindful of the etymological roots of words, and through delving deeply into the meanings of words, I came to see the power and wonder that was embodied in these words. In the process, I found myself reclaiming a language of the spiritual that enhances the ways that I can write and talk about what is most authentic for me in education. Through the writing of the dissertation, I came to new understandings of who I am. Although I acknowledge that this process was just one way of coming to know myself in what is a lifelong process, nonetheless, I view coming to terms with spirituality as pedagogy as central in my ongoing transformation as a person and an educator.

We often marvel at the energy, focus, and productivity with which our colleague has pursued the lines of inquiry established in her dissertation. However, as discussed above, we have been struck by the number of study group members who, in spite of doing excellent dissertations, seem to experience a prolonged sense of postgraduation malaise. The following passage from Lynn's think piece helped to crystallize the complex mix of issues that may contribute to an intellectual disequilibrium:

> In my post-Doctoral reflections, I have come to realize that I have been grieving the loss of the study which propelled me (and gave me administrative license) to create, personalize, and infuse my classroom with creative dramatics. I also have acknowledged that if I were sustaining the same intensity of application of the classroom drama process, I would have to be engaged in another doctoral dissertation. However, I have also considered the possibility that I have met my professional/status goals—having traversed the horizontal columns of the salary scale, becoming the highest paid teacher and the only doctor in the district's classrooms—and need to look to new educational horizons. Subsequently, I have co-authored creative dramatics modules/scripts for primary teachers, taught informal drama to graduate students at the University, presented sessions at local and national conferences, and continued my work with the Obnova Renewal Children's Art Gallery (an extended project with its roots in a four-day workshop which I presented with a university team to educators in Bosnia-Herzegovina.) I have written arti-

> cles for *Stage of the Art Magazine*, a publication of the American Alliance of Theatre Educators (Spring 1998, pp. 5-10). I continue in the scholarly discourses of the Study Group. And yet, I still remain professionally unfulfilled and feeling guilty. Another colleague and I attempted to initiate a Teacher Inquiry Group within the District—none of us was able to sustain the focused energies or consistent interest that the dissertation process provides.

The intensity of the dissertation process itself can be exceptionally meaningful. Without such intensity, it is possible to feel adrift, with no particular purpose or direction. Yet knowing the toll that such intense commitment takes may engender some ambivalence. On one hand, the sense of freedom is appealing. On the other hand, there may be a longing to recapture the heightened sense of intellectual engagement associated with the dissertation.

Seeking Contexts and Direction for Deliberation

Sorting through this odd mix of feelings and deciding what to do with one's life after the dissertation may take some time. Just as Lynn has given presentations, written articles, and engaged in teaching, so, too, have Kathy, Pat, and Marilyn pursued these traditional modes of scholarly activity. Yet these episodic endeavors do not match the sustained intellectual effort of the dissertation, nor do they automatically provide an ongoing deliberative milieu. Lynn's attempt to create an inquiry group within her district parallels a similar effort that Maria made nearly 20 years ago. For both, the underlying intent was to create an intellectually stimulating context within their work environments. Lack of organizational support and the difficulty of identifying a critical mass of peers with the time or inclination for deliberation led to failure in both cases. In the end, Lynn and Maria, as well as Kathy, Pat, and Marilyn, have continued to participate in the dissertation study group because it provides a milieu of intense, discursive deliberation that has not been available to them elsewhere. Within this context, they can continue to make contributions by supporting the scholarly endeavors of others.

We have come to associate this longing for a deliberative context with the most fundamental transformation wrought by the dissertation. As expressed by Marilyn, deliberation is not merely something one does. Rather, it becomes a way of being in and relating to the world. Sue Goodwin, a former study group member, and now a highly regarded school superintendent, has found a way to integrate her deliberative capacity within her professional life:

> The fact I chose to conduct a conceptual study struck a part of how I go about doing whatever it is I do. I don't seem to be making conscious choices here, but I intuitively seem to end up where I belong. Such is the case with the dissertation. My study was an evolving study . . . one that changed course and grew as I gathered data. So is the superintendency . . . at least the way I best approach it. Each issue is dynamic, each destination has no map. I think this ties in closely with why I have been so

> opposed to functionalist models of staff development or planning throughout my career.
>
> The process of conducting a conceptual study may actually have helped me prepare for the superintendency. I tolerate well ambiguity, chaos, and change. Not knowing an answer or, better yet, not knowing exactly what I'm looking for serves to motivate me like a detective, to continue looking. I experience each day on the job the same emotions that I felt while conducting my study . . . at times frustration sometimes bordering on fear . . . fear of an unknown outcome, or fear that the outcome will stretch me beyond my limits.
>
> I have come to understand that to be a truly good superintendent I have to work with my context (the data!). I can't control it, or even direct it. I move in and out of it, listening to it and taking direction from all aspects of it (community, staff, culture, curriculum, students, etc.). Once I can do this, the context (data) seems to embrace me and allow me to move freely within it and become a part of its dynamic nature. I haven't yet figured out my importance. Maybe like the conceptual researcher, I collect data, synthesize it, and try to communicate some sense of it to our people.

As mentioned in relation to real-time discourses, becoming involved in a discourse community can provide a context for continued deliberation. In fact, Jean Konzal, whose dissertation was used as an exemplar in Chapters 4 and 5, has been instrumental in organizing the AERA Special Interest Group on Arts-Based Educational Research. In 1997, Jean received the Mary Catherine Ellwein Outstanding Dissertation Award from the Qualitative Research Special Interest Group and Division D of the American Educational Research Association, as well as the Outstanding Dissertation Award from the Families as Educators Special Interest Group. Today, Jean continues to pursue her interest in using readers theater to promote deliberations among teachers, administrators, and parents.

Similarly, one of our colleagues, Dr. Maureen Porter, received the 1996 Rural Education Dissertation Award from the National Rural Education Association for her dissertation, *Moving Mountains: Reform, Resistance, and Resiliency in an Appalachian Kentucky High School* (Porter, 1997). Not only does she continue her own work in educational ethnography, but she also devotes considerable effort to creating substantive fieldwork opportunities where she can mentor novice researchers.

Activities such as these can provide outlets for one's scholarly and creative energies. So, too, can writing.

Refocusing a Writing Agenda

Writing, of course, is a traditional way in which young scholars capitalize on their dissertation research. Indeed, as mentioned above, several study group alumnae, particularly those who pursued faculty positions in research universities, have continued ambitious research and writing agendas. Of greater curiosity to us, however, is the number of study group members who have been slow to use

this avenue for scholarly engagement. This has been especially puzzling because those who are drawn to qualitative research tend to have at least a proclivity, if not major talent, for writing.

For some time, we speculated that the structural integrity of qualitative dissertations made it difficult to dismantle them into shorter presentations or publishable articles. Maria, in fact, struggled a great deal with this issue in the years immediately following her graduation. As she explains,

> Looking back, I can now see several dysfunctional assumptions that kept me from writing. I thought I had to condense my entire dissertation into a short article. For the life of me, I couldn't figure out how to do that and authentically portray the inquiry. I also thought that I had to provide as much data in an article as I had in the dissertation. Without that, how could I warrant whatever argument I was making? So this kept me stuck for a long time. It was Pat's dissertation that really helped me break through this dysfunctional mind set. Integral to Pat's study was the notion of contrived ambiguity. This was very interesting to me, because of some curriculum consulting I was doing at the time. I desperately wanted Pat to write an article that I could give to several faculty with whom I was collaborating. At that point, I saw the possibility of taking a particular concept or issue from the dissertation and using it (rather than the entire dissertation) as the centerpiece for an article. This seems so obvious now, I'm almost embarrassed to say it.

Yet what became so obvious to Maria did not immediately catalyze a flurry of writing activity for Pat. A couple of years later, however, the two formed a small writing group. Discussions within that new forum have shed additional light on this puzzling reluctance to write about their dissertations. For both Pat and Maria, writing is their primary mode for grappling with perplexing aspects of experience. Indeed, both were instinctively drawn to qualitative research for precisely this reason. Thus, crafting the dissertation was a way in which to solve a complex and nagging conceptual puzzle. Once an amorphous and confusing jumble of experience was sorted out and put into perspective through writing, neither had much interest in revisiting these "old puzzles." For a while, they were satisfied to enjoy a time of "contentedly" resting in their practice (Rowan, 1981; Stabile, n.d.).

The intriguing part is the way in which new intellectual puzzles were beginning to stir beneath the apparent calm of these surface experiences. It was only a matter of time before they were overcome by a renewed *narrative desire*. This desire, it seems, is more readily embraced and actualized in the service of inquiry than in the functional (re)packaging of written pieces simply for the sake of publication.

These observations have led to several final speculations about the role of writing in refocusing one's intellectual life after the dissertation. Crafting an interpretive dissertation seems to bring to more conscious awareness the power of "writing as a mode of inquiry" (Adams, 1984; Richardson, 1994). The experience of the dissertation may allow for a more focused harnessing of one's proclivity and talents for writing. A postdissertation reflection by Pat (Exemplar 10.4)

EXEMPLAR 10.4 Becoming Through Writing

It is difficult for me to consider how my life has changed since I became a Doctor of Education without embracing the moments along the way that helped me reach my goal. The idea of "becoming" reminds me of Eudora Welty (1984), specifically her elegant autobiography, *One Writer's Beginnings,* in which she marks the unfolding stages of her development as a writer with chapters titled "Listening," "Learning to See," and "Finding a Voice." Although Welty is describing the process of becoming a writer of fiction, I believe I moved through this same pattern of consciousness while writing my dissertation. Of course, the narrative nature of my dissertation lends itself to Welty's philosophy, but I am inclined to say that all good interpretive research comprises these stages of awareness in the journey to become a scholar, and that these stages are amorphous and reflexive.

Long before I actually began writing my dissertation, I was listening. Soon after I began my doctoral studies, I realized that at least part of the inherent drama of being a doctoral student was knowing how to listen and to whom. One of my professors, eventually a member of my dissertation committee, was fond of saying, "Writing a dissertation should change your life!" His own dissertation had been reviewed in *The New York Times,* and its subsequent acclaim had indeed, I surmised, changed his life. I didn't think there was even a remote chance of my work finding its way to *The New York Times* or even the local gazette, but I did hold on to the possibility that writing a dissertation could change one's life. I think I heard what he wanted me to, and while the idea of writing a dissertation was still frightening, his mantra reaffirmed something I had only dared to wish: Writing a dissertation did not have to be the unpleasant obligatory conclusion to one's coursework. It was around this time in my studies that I vowed to stop listening to the various horror stories of fellow graduate students who were further along in the program than I was. If I wanted to believe in possibilities that I could not yet even imagine, I knew I would have to listen to my own voice, a mere whisper of encouragement. But as faint as it was, I could hear it, and it made me a more careful listener. What I needed most as I approached the end of my coursework was someone else to hear me.

Someone did hear, and she is also the person who enabled me to enter another phase of my doctoral studies: learning to see. This professor offered me an alternative lens through which to see my world, and when I tried it on, the view was breathtaking. For the first time in my life, everything was in focus. This professor, eventually my dissertation chair and research advisor, Dr. Noreen Garman, introduced me to myself. As strange as this may sound, it is true. It is not enough to say that she introduced me to qualitative research. What I learned in her classes is that I cannot separate myself from my research. And so, the more I grew to understand my research stance, my worldview, the better acquainted I became with myself: the individual, the teacher, the writer, the interpretive researcher.

Now I could hear my voice; it was louder, and I thought it was the voice of a storyteller. What had been an unformed wish, that writing my dissertation would not be a sterile, uneventful undertaking, now became a promise: I could seize this opportunity to write a dissertation about something that really mattered to me. I saw my dissertation as an invitation to immerse myself in an extended inquiry. I would write to discover how I could become a better teacher, and I could use narrative as a means of coming to know. This is why writing my dissertation was one of the most meaningful events of my life.

continued

Through my writing, I found my voice, and a teacher-researcher emerged. This highly focused exploration of my teaching was the gift that my dissertation presented me.

Part of the gift of writing my dissertation was the hard work it required. It was an extended lesson in learning about my students, my teaching, and myself. It was also a lesson about thinking and writing. Eudora Welty (1984) states, "Learning stamps you with its moments. It isn't steady. It's a pulse" (p. 10). I believe this insight accurately reflects one's movement through the entire arc of the dissertation process, from the time a graduate student begins to imagine what she will study to the day she submits her document for review and defends her work. But certainly, Welty's description of the pulselike process of learning resonates most strongly with me when I think about the actual task of writing my dissertation. As I look back on the experience, I can feel the tempo of my own moments of discovery as I wrote. The rhythm of my writing was not always smooth, because my ability to make connections did not occur at a steady pace. Sometimes, there were long pauses between my beats of insight; I was still in the process of learning to see. Between these beats (sometimes labor-intensive episodes that seemingly yielded nothing), I would call to mind the advice of another of my teachers and dissertation committee members. His words enabled me to put the dissertation experience in perspective. He wanted me to see this time in my life for what it was, and so he used to say to me, "Remember, your dissertation is not the culmination of all you know or all you will ever be; it's your ticket into the conversation. It is the beginning of your life as a researcher, not the end." These were important words for me to hear, because they reminded me that I really was on my way to "becoming." My dissertation was not a destination; it was part of my journey to become a scholar. This meant that even the rough moments of writing (or not writing) were potentially significant opportunities for deepening my understanding, not only of the focus of my study but of my own conceptualizing and composing processes. There is such drama in this perspective! The dissertation imbues its writer with a heightened sense of awareness, a vigilance for discovering connections and making meaning. Again, I will refer to Eudora Welty (1984), who so artfully describes this experience:

> Connections slowly emerge. Like distant landmarks you are approaching, cause and effect begin to align themselves, draw closer together. Experiences too indefinite of outline in themselves connect and are identified as a larger shape. And suddenly a light is thrown back, as when your train makes a curve, showing that there has been a mountain of meaning rising behind you on the way you've come, is rising there still, proven now through retrospect. (p. 98)

Looking back on my dissertation journey, I can still feel the impact of its effect on me. The work of my dissertation—not only what I learned but also how I learned—is reflected in the goals I set for myself today. In this sense, my interpretive study is ongoing, dynamic, generative. It was the start of an adventure that has enriched my life in many ways, both personally and professionally. I believe I am a better person for having gone through the rigors of the dissertation experience; I have a deeper understanding of who I am and what I know and how I know, and this knowledge has made me a more effective teacher. I believe I wrote my way into understanding how to become a better teacher. I excavated and explored the ground of my practice, bringing to light and naming what had previously been intuitive and unnamed. In giving language to what it is I do in the classroom, I have come to see myself and my pedagogy more clearly, and this

continued

clarity has given me a foundation upon which I may continue to build the art and scholarship of my teaching.

So, when people ask me how my life is different now that I am a PhD, I tell them that there have been no great external changes. I still work at the same community college, teaching my usual array of classes and serving on committees with the same colleagues and friends. I received no pay increase, no bonus or special benefits. The real changes I carry within me every time I walk into a classroom or talk with a student or reinvent my curriculum. My dissertation is now part of me, and it was through writing my narrative that I came face to face with the story of who I am. When I speak now, I hear the voice of a more knowledgeable, understanding, and invigorated teacher. This was my goal from the start. Becoming a PhD was my reward for reaching that goal.

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provides an insightful account of the transformation wrought by coming to own one's narrative sensibility.

Thus, filling the intellectual void left by completing the dissertation is not merely a matter of doing "some—any—writing." Rather, it entails slogging around in experiential puddles until a new embryonic image begins to take shape. The deliberative curiosity associated with bringing this shadowy image to light can provide a new focus for one's intellectual life and precipitate new cycles of deliberation.

Afterword

In the preceding chapters, we have portrayed the dissertation process as cycles of deliberation. Although we highlight seven major cycles, there is nothing sacrosanct about the number seven. Rather, we use these cycles as a heuristic to underscore the point that qualitative dissertations are brought to fruition through successive iterations of thinking and writing. Throughout the book, we have argued that discursive deliberation is both a driving force and sustaining energy for qualitative dissertation inquiry.

One of our intentions in writing this book has been to demystify the dissertation experience—giving a clearer sense of issues that require attention, pitfalls that can hinder progress, and approaches that foster forward movement. This perspective does not paint an easy picture of the dissertation. Indeed, we believe it does students and the academy a grave disservice to imply that the dissertation should be made simple. We hope that the day never comes when we enter a bookstore and see, nestled among the piles of black and yellow self-instructional manuals, the title *Dissertations for Dummies*.

For us and for many of the students with whom we have been privileged to work, the transformative power of the dissertation cannot and should not be trivialized. Doctoral study offers the possibility of transformation from student to novice researcher to scholar. This, from our perspective, is the very essence of doctoral study.

Yet this personal transformation can be bittersweet. On one hand, earning the doctoral degree can bring the satisfaction of career advancement, professional recognition, and a sense of accomplishment. But for those who embrace the notion of deliberation and allow the dissertation to touch their hearts, the sweetness of these rewards can be intermingled with a sense of loss. A false, even arrogant, sense of certainty is traded for a more tenuous relationship with life's ambiguities. This is not an easy way of living in the world, nor may it be what many students bargained for when they entered a doctoral program. Our aim in sharing this challenging vision of the dissertation is not to dissuade novice researchers from taking the journey. Rather, it is to make more explicit both the difficulties and the rewards of choosing a deliberative path.

Several years ago, we hosted a gathering of past and present study group members. Approximately 25 women met and shared their dissertation experiences.

Some were seasoned veterans from the first-generation group, and others were neophytes just beginning their journey. As we were socializing after the more formal portion of the meeting, one "old-timer" came up to us and said, "They're standing on our shoulders. It's so exciting to hear what they're doing. Back when we were all struggling to understand qualitative research, I never dreamed where our work would lead—how other students could build on what we did. It's just so exciting."

Our colleague's comment brought home something we had been sensing but had not put into words. Indeed, members of the current study group were standing on the shoulders of earlier members and of each other. Cautious forays into the interpretive realm had blossomed into vigorous explorations of this epistemological terrain. The notion of embedding dissertation research in the context of one's practice had emerged from shadow into full light. Embryonic forms of stories and tales matured into sophisticated narratives. These are among the legacies of deliberation within our own small discourse community.

In writing this book, we have tried to extend this legacy to others who might be drawn to interpretive dissertation research. It is our way of honoring those who remain true to their own ways of knowing, and of supporting those who are willing to temper their ideas and themselves in the crucible of deliberative inquiry.

Recently, a young man we'll call Jeff was referred to Noreen for help in interpreting his dissertation data. It seems he had gathered quite a bit of qualitative data and was struggling to make sense of it without interjecting his own view into the interpretation. As the conversation evolved, he said, "You mean, I can offer *my* perspective on what all this means?" "Who else's perspective could you offer?" Noreen responded. This led to a further exploration of Jeff's dilemma. It seems that he was working in a broader, empirically oriented project where objectivity was a taken-for-granted value. As glimmers of interpretive possibility began to surface, Jeff offered, "You know, what I really want to do is write biographies. In fact, I'm working on one now that is going to be published. As soon as I've got this dissertation behind me, I'm going to concentrate on writing biographies." The irony, of course, was that Jeff and his dissertation were ideally suited to a biographical genre of interpretive research. Apparently, it had never occurred to Jeff that he might wed his penchant for biography with his dissertation.

Our hope in writing this book has been to forestall such wasted opportunities for others who, like Jeff, might have gladly followed an interpretive path had they just known it was possible. From our perspective, the dissertation experience is a journey rich with possibilities—the possibility of discovering one's scholarly self, the possibility of adding one's own voice to the evolving discourses of qualitative dissertation research, and the possibility of forging one's own unique legacy through scholarly deliberation.

THINK PIECE #1

What Do We Mean by Deliberation?

During an introduction to a qualitative research class, we were discussing the importance of deliberation when one class member remarked, "I think deliberation is important, but as an administrator, I don't have the luxury of having a lot of deliberation. I have to make decisions on the firing line, and there's just no time for deliberation." Other class members nodded, seemingly in agreement.

We realized that for many, the term *deliberation* means discussion. It conjures up images of people talking with people at great length. In the relentless pace of the world of the practicing educator, making a decision by committee is a frill, often seen as "group grope." And although the decade of the 1990s has brought a fervent interest in collaborative efforts in education, we have found that deliberation is not an easy notion to grasp. Practitioners who return to graduate study are expected to assume a deliberative mode of learning, yet this is often in conflict with their assumptions about academic expectations. Students run the risk of becoming what we refer to as encapsulated learners.

In this think piece, we first attempt to contrast two frames of mind: *encapsulation* versus *deliberation*. We posit that the mind-set of encapsulation is a barrier to deliberative learning. We then contrast deliberation with discussion, suggesting that students often confuse the two concepts. Finally, we explicate the notions of *discourse* and *discursive deliberation*, a process inherent in inquiry learning.

Encapsulation Versus Deliberation

It is not uncommon for professionals who decide to return to formal studies to experience a state of mind known as *encapsulation*. As professionals for a number of years, they are used to being in the mode of "performing" their professional duties. As students, they are expected to "inquire," to, in essence, change their learning proclivities. On one hand, they often bring with them a certain

amount of scholastic folklore (Garman, 1985), subtle expectations of the way formal teaching and learning is supposed to be. On the other hand, they harbor feelings of resistance, often expressed as, "This is not the *real* world." Many hold at least two role images of themselves—one, the professional, and the other, the student. The professional self looks for direct role-learning cues, those ideas and methods thought of as practical and useable in one's own work world. Meanwhile, the student self looks for traditional teacher cues to find out what one is *supposed to get out of class involvements.* In this frame of mind, the primary sources of information that students can accept are their own professional experiences (taking place elsewhere) and the teacher's syllabus of objectives and readings. Students often become trapped between these two roles. As long as they are mentally encapsulated by their own scholastic folklore, their level of learning is impoverished. The powerful force that causes one to search for cues to what one is supposed to be understanding is the same force that blocks out personal inquiry and the self as instrument of learning. It impedes the search for insight and meaning that leads to knowledge regarding one's own world. Encapsulation, then, can be construed as the self lost in the tension between the professional role and the student role that manifests in a form of estrangement and keeps one from a deliberative frame of mind.

As professionals continue to take graduate courses, they become more socialized to the student role and less frustrated by the lack of immediate relevance to their world of work. More important, many students begin to find relationships between their academic and professional worlds. However, the conditions of encapsulation remain. The coursework structure encourages students to focus most of their energies on interpreting and meeting the expectations set by the instructor and the syllabus. One professor expressed a common complaint: "These students continue to want to be told what to do for the class, even after I've explained the expectations. It's a shame they can't be more independent learners." We suspect that when students are asking, "What does she [the professor] *really* want?" they actually mean, "What is it that I need to do to be successful in this class?" Formal graduate programs and courses in the United States generally are not organized so that students can be independent learners. However, when doctoral students move into the dissertation experience, they become independent learners whether they are ready or not. Deliberation becomes an imperative. Students are expected to move from a coursework mode to a deliberative one.

Deliberation occurs in socially constructed ways. We come to know something through engagement in lived experiences. Ideas are advanced as stances and counterstances are put on record through talking and writing. These experiences include mutually conflictual and contrastive voices that advance positions and add to or challenge existing ideas. Deliberation is commonly used to describe how groups proceed when making a decision. (A jury deliberates in order to render a verdict; a congressional committee goes into deliberation regarding a legislative proposal, etc.) Whether deliberation is associated with a group process or an individual consideration, it means that one is actively engaged in

seeking information, carefully weighing the ideas, and acting on the results. Thus, one comes to an idea or decision through thoughtful consideration, often by deliberate consultation or discussion.

For the doctoral student, then, we are suggesting that a deliberative mode of learning can be portrayed as continual cycles that require the learner to *question*, *listen*, *think*, and *act*. In framing productive questions, one is actively seeking information or commentary about his or her preconceived ideas. In a deliberative mode, listening requires one to set aside judgmental filters in order to hear more deeply what is being presented. Thoughtful reasoning helps the learner sort out the significant from the trivial. Most important, however, is the action—what one does with the information presented. Action here implies a way of thinking in order to advance the inquiry. This may mean further conceptualization, consideration of new ideas, and revision of current thinking. In the deliberative mode, ideas are treated as momentary conclusions that are always subject to revision and extension. To act, then, is to revise, to produce a next draft of one's thinking and writing. The cycles of deliberation continually include questioning, listening, thinking, and acting, albeit not necessarily in that order.

Discussion Versus Deliberation

In a School of Education, as well as other places in the academy, discussion is viewed as one of the most valued of all class events. There is a popular assumption that when students exchange ideas, either among themselves or with the instructor, important learning is taking place. Class discussion might be an example of deliberation, or it might be an example of people in conversation, talking with and at each other. Indeed, there is a kind of knowledge generating that comes from conversation. As people put forward ideas, others may choose to agree or disagree. In many cases, group discussion can help members become aware of each other and begin to develop a respect for the diversity of the group. This is an important result, but it should not be mistaken for deliberation. In the exchange of ideas, group members are often focused on being respectful or promoting their own experiences. Within coursework, groups are organized and directed to their tasks by the instructor or the syllabus, and, as we suggested earlier, this tends to focus the group on the "assignment for the class" rather than on an inquiry in question.

As students move into studying for the comprehensive examination and/or beginning the dissertation process, they find it necessary to identify others (most importantly, their advisor) as resources for their work. The lived experience of deliberation becomes a reality. It requires a very different way of being a learner. Sources of knowing come from continuous deliberate efforts on the part of the learner. (We tend to forget that reading a scholarly journal can also be considered a "lived experience.") In addition, many students join study groups in order to establish themselves within a community of discourse for their deliberations.

Deliberation and Discourse

In the scholarly literature, the terms *deliberation* and *discourse* are often used interchangeably. In fact, we found ourselves using them without concern for the distinction. Currently, however, we have come to think of *discourse* as a theoretical term (Sills & Jensen, 1992), whereas *deliberation* implies the here and now of questioning, listening, thinking, and acting—a process within the broader concept of discourse. As poststructuralists use the concept of discourse, it "communicates the social relatedness of the human world, and more specifically, our social relatedness as inscribed in and expressed through language" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 49). Bové (1990) suggests that

> the term "discourse" now has a newly powerful critical function: . . . the new sense of "discourse" allows us to describe: the "self-evident" and the "commonsensical" are what have the privilege of unnoticed power, and this power produces instruments of control. This matter of control is rather difficult; it does not mean, as in certain Freudian or Marxist theories, control by repression or exclusion. It means, rather, control by power of positive production: that is, a kind of power that generates certain kinds of questions, placed within systems that legitimate, support, and answer those questions; a kind of power, that, in the process, includes within its systems all those it produces as agents capable of acting within them. (p. 54)

In the academic sense, discourse has come to represent the language exchanges within a topic or a field of study. For example, Foucault (1972, 1980) discusses the discourse system that produces psychiatrists who let people talk, or rather, "confess," and thereby control the practice. From Foucault's point of view, all intellectuals, all teachers and students within the disciplines, are to some extent incorporated within these systems of control based upon the mode of knowledge production that defines much of our social world. As Bové (1990) posits, "There is no place for any of us to stand outside of it" (p. 54). The term *discourse* has provided another of the powerful analytical and theoretical concepts that allow us to grapple with contemporary society and its history.

When engaging in formal knowledge, we carry forth a stream of ideas (lines of discourse, schools of thought, dialectics, etc.). Philosophers have attempted to explain this under the guise of epistemology (how we come to know something) and, recently, ontology (what we take to be reality), as well as axiology (what we come to value). For academic purposes, it is important to remind ourselves that discursive knowledge is created in many different ways through the exchange and interpretation of ideas, as well as the interpretation of experience. For instance, Cherryholmes (1988), in discussing educational discourse, posits that "educational discourse ranges from what is *said* in elementary classrooms, teacher education classes, and research findings reported at conferences and conventions to what is *written* in high school textbooks, assessment exams, and

research articles in professional journals" (p. 3). Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) says that these are necessarily dialogic activities. He reminds us that there must be "engagement" for a learning relationship to take place, and that it is not enough to have a dual or multiple relationship of exchanged ideas; rather, it is the nature of that relationship that matters. He says:

> The idea *lives* not in one person's *isolated* individual consciousness—if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into the genuine dialogic relationship with other ideas, with the ideas of *others*. Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is, in someone else's consciousness expressed in discourse. At that point of contact between voice consciousnesses the idea is born and lives. (p. 188)

In Bakhtin's terms, discourse (or dialogism) is the means by which culture lives and renews itself through language.

Discourse has come to mean a source of knowledge to be generated; it means socially constructed knowledge; it means communities of discourse, and, in the academic sense, it means an institutional system for the production of knowledge in regulated language. We all live in discursive communities of several kinds. Academic communities are only one kind, and there are many discursive communities represented in the academy. Families, neighborhoods, and careers are all possible discursive communities, and we continue to create our understandings as we carry on our deliberations within them.

We find the term *discursive deliberation*, then, to be a useful concept for our purposes. It suggests that, as students engage in deliberation during the dissertation experience, they struggle to understand the connections in their own studies (discourses in their chosen topic and field). Discursive deliberation implies that the dissertation process is carried on within communities of discourse. Moreover, dissertation research is a special kind of inquiry. Doctoral dissertations represent a system of discourse as a privileged entry into a community of scholars. Thus, discursive deliberation results in a disciplinary creation through a process of producing and regulating the movement of knowledge, the forms of language, and the training of scholarly minds and bodies.

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THINK PIECE #2

Dissertation Study Groups: Cultivating a Community for Discursive Deliberation

Our conviction that deliberation and discourse are integral to qualitative dissertation research is grounded in our experiences with a dissertation study group. Beginning in 1980, the study group has evolved through three generations and has involved more than 50 doctoral students. So steeped are we in the discourses of this deliberative community that it is impossible for us to talk about qualitative dissertations without referencing the study group. Our almost offhand remarks about the study group often evoke as much interest as our comments about qualitative modes of inquiry. Students, in particular, are prone to ask, "How does your study group work?" "How could I start a study group?" "Does a faculty member need to be involved?" "What can I do if being in a group is not possible at my university?"

There are no easy answers to these questions. Groups, like individuals, seem to have a distinctive personality, almost magically created from a unique mix of qualities. Therefore, we do not believe it is useful—or possible—to provide a set of guidelines that others can implement in order to replicate our type of study group. Instead, in the first half of this think piece, we try to give a flavor of the group—how it came into being and how it operates. This narrative portrayal focuses on three fundamental principles that shape the deliberative and discursive nature of the study group. The second half of the think piece suggests other ways in which students might cultivate a climate conducive to their own discursive deliberation.

A Narrative Portrayal of Our Dissertation Study Group

Our dissertation study group began when five of Noreen Garman's advisees (including Maria Piantanida) reached the dissertation stage of their doctoral work

at about the same time. Dissatisfied with her own dissertation experience, and sensing that her advisees might be interested in doing "alternative" research, Noreen raised the possibility of our forming a group to explore how we might approach our dissertations. In issuing this invitation, she made three points very clear. One, she had no answers and would be learning along with us. Two, the main focus of our learning would be on research approaches as they serve the topic of the dissertation. Three, participation would be voluntary. Without our realizing it at the time, these three "conditions" became enduring principles of the group's culture.

Study, Not Support, Is the Purpose of the Group. Noreen's commitment to her own learning within the group context helped to cultivate a climate of discursive deliberation. Rather than being structured like an academic course in which the instructor transmits knowledge to students, the study group's learning occurred as members discussed questions; explored issues; shared resources; and, most importantly, critiqued each other's work. Although Noreen seemed to have a better sense of where we were heading, it was clear that she, too, was grappling with epistemological and methodological issues related to each person's study. This climate of mutual learning continues today as group members explore new modes of inquiry that continually challenge what we understand about qualitative research.

Although the overarching focus of the group is learning, it would be misleading to overlook its social and supportive aspect. The group meets around the dining room table at Noreen's house. Generally, we convene about 6:00 p.m. as members arrive laden not only with drafts of dissertation documents but also food to share. For about 30 to 40 minutes, there is a flurry of food and visiting activity while members get caught up on personal news and set out a buffet meal. Once everyone has a plate full of food, the conversation turns to the "work at hand." Members who want help ask for time on the agenda, and the discussion begins.

The quality of the connections among group members is difficult to describe. Although some members maintain friendships outside the group, most do not socialize on a routine basis. Although members appreciate the strong sense of connection, commitment, and support, most do not attend meetings after they complete their dissertation. Yet most group alumnae express a sense of kinship, even with members who came long after their involvement in the group ended, and demonstrate a loyalty to each other even years after finishing their degree.

We would be remiss in painting a totally rosy picture of group membership. For some students, the study group has not been particularly helpful. After participating for a period of time (sometimes for a year or more), these students stop coming to meetings. Sometimes, we learned through the grapevine that they had found a different type of support elsewhere. Others just seemed to fade away. Over time, we have come to see that there can be a "dark side" to the study group, when students feel like they don't fit in or can't measure up. Although we try to be sensitive to this issue, it is not always possible to read the cues of distress. Nor is it possible for the group to meet everyone's needs. The strongest safeguard we have for these difficulties is the voluntary nature of participation.

Participation is Voluntary. Over the years, students have come to the group through a variety of pathways. All but one member of the original study group were Noreen's advisees and joined in response to an invitation from Noreen. The second-generation study group was formed when several students asked Noreen for support in finishing their dissertations. When our school of education underwent a radical restructuring, some of these students had lost their advisors; others had lost a sense of connection with their department or program. As other students heard about the group, they approached Noreen about joining it. Members of this study group were not necessarily Noreen's advisees. The third generation emerged gradually from the second group. Once again, Noreen invited her advisees to join the group. In addition, other faculty who had advisees with a qualitative bent began referring their students to the group. More recently, several students have asked Maria to serve on their dissertation committees as their research advisor. She has invited these students to join the group.

Our growing recognition of the dark side of the group has led us to make our invitations more tentative. We ask students to come and see what the group is like and to judge for themselves whether it might be helpful. A commitment to join the group can come later, once students have a better feel for what they would be getting into. We hope that this provides a less pressured way for students to ease into or opt out of the group. Interestingly, the "study, not support" principle seems to serve as a self-screening device. Students who define support as finishing the dissertation as expeditiously as possible do not find the group of much use. These are among the students who tend to leave after a few meetings.

In considering the voluntary nature of group participation, it is important to note that Noreen's involvement is also voluntary. Facilitating the study group is not part of her official teaching load at the university. Because students do not register for the study group or pay tuition, she receives no credit-hour generation for this activity. Although it is possible to see the group as fulfilling her academic advising responsibilities, this overlooks the fact that the group also includes students who are not her advisees.

A third facet of voluntary participation involves group alumnae. The third-generation study group is co-facilitated by Maria, an alumna from the original study group, and includes three second-generation alumnae who attend with great regularity both to contribute their perspectives to the group and to pursue their own writing projects. In addition, several other alumnae from the second-generation group periodically sit in on meetings. Although none of these graduates receives monetary compensation for her involvement, all feel richly rewarded by the quality of the relationships within the group, the opportunity to engage in scholarly discourse, the satisfaction of sharing their knowledge and experience with others, and their ongoing learning about qualitative research.

Mode of Inquiry as Major Focus of Learning. The commitment that study group members make is to engage in the learning needed for them to conceptualize and conduct a respectable qualitative dissertation. Although the topic area of the dissertation is an important facet of each individual's learning, this is not the dominant focus of group deliberations. When individuals first join the group,

they do talk about their topic area as they begin to articulate the intent of their study. Even though group members practice in very different arenas (e.g., elementary art education, public school administration, program evaluation, genetics counseling), it is amazing how often individuals have personal experiences or strong points of view about each other's topics. Admittedly, topics are so compelling and intriguing that we often succumb to the temptation to explore these issues. Interestingly, however, the group seems to be self-regulating in this regard. After a time, more experienced members will raise questions that shift attention from the topic of the study to the mode of inquiry or research procedures. Typically, as newcomers gain a clearer sense of the intent of their study and the nature of the inquiry process, their need to talk about the topic decreases. Likewise, as group members develop a shared context for understanding each person's study, their need to ask background questions about the topic decreases. Conversations about topics *per se* tend to shift to the initial food-and-visiting period as the group gets settled for the meeting. Beyond this, discussions of topic usually (although not always) press for understanding how information emerging from the inquiry can be interpreted and portrayed in the dissertation.

Group members who want to be on the agenda may share their current thinking or work in one of several ways. They may talk through a point that is causing them difficulty, in which case they bring no written material to the group. They may distribute a relatively short piece of writing, which the group reads and then discusses. Occasionally, members may read such pieces aloud prior to discussion, or they may allude to issues embedded in the document but ask others to read and comment after the meeting. As documents become longer and more complete, copies may be given to all or some group members for in-depth review and comment at the next meeting. Sometimes, as copying lengthy documents becomes prohibitively expensive, group members will provide oral summaries. At other times, individuals will give a status report describing where they are in the process—including being stalled or unable to devote time to the dissertation.

Although study group membership usually hovers around 10 to 12 people, rarely does everyone need attention at the same time. This allows us to have manageable agendas for the meetings, which usually run for 3 to 4 hours. It is important to note that members come to the tri-weekly meetings even when they do not need time on the agenda. Strongly embedded in the culture of the group is a commitment to give to the deliberations of others, as well as to get assistance for oneself. Invariably, study group members talk about the value of listening to and joining in the conceptual struggles of others. Often, they can see research issues more clearly within the context of other studies and then assimilate the insights as they think about their own dissertations.

Experiencing this type of deliberative discourse over a span of 17 years and with more than 50 students has convinced us that the learning within a study group structure is fundamentally different from learning within an academic course structure. Although courses on research methods are unquestionably important resources for the dissertation, students often focus their energy on meeting faculty expectations as specified in the syllabus. Consequently, even when

instructors design courses to support the dissertation needs of students, students who remain in "course mode" may fail to transfer the information to their own inquiry. *In our own experience of teaching research courses, we have ob*served how difficult it is for students to shift from the course mode of learning to a more deliberative and discursive mode. We see a deeper, transformative learning occur within study group members as attention shifts from an instructor-set agenda to their own inquiry. The following comments by four group members allude to fundamental changes in sense of self as a person, practitioner, and scholar:

> "I have learned a great deal. First of all, the members of the study group are exceptional scholars, and I am in awe of their scholarship. I never fail to learn from them. Being at study group is more intense than being in some classes. When I go home from study group, it takes me a while to 'wind down.' I have learned that when people deeply care about what they do and about one another in the process, every experience is made richer. What I take away from the study group experience affects everything else I do and how I think about myself."

> "I have learned new uses of language as well as approaches to research. I no longer see things in the same way, and I question more. I listen more, and I am slower to formulate conclusions. I also question, but hopefully interrogate more. Although these responses are quite general, this is what I think I do now because of the study group."

> "How to do research and how to help others do research. Have studied qualitative-interpretive research through readings shared and examples of other studies. How to demystify the research and deal with a normally anxious time for self and others. What it means to be a scholar."

> "Participating in the Study Group was more about becoming than learning. I was a good teacher with a fairly narrow focus when I entered the Study Group. With Noreen's guidance and the relationships that developed with other Group members, I became an educator with a broader view of teaching and learning. I also began to believe (in stages) that I could actually conduct a grounded theory study and report it in a scholarly fashion. I learned that with the proper support I can do just about anything. This belief has carried over into my style of leadership and is part of the overall belief system in our school district."

We hope that this section has portrayed the deliberative and discursive nature of our dissertation study group and, in so doing, has given readers some ideas for forming a group of their own. Recognizing that each reader's situation is likely to be different, we now turn to some additional approaches that might be more feasible depending on one's circumstances.

Additional Approaches to Study Groups

Many variations of the study group concept are possible. A variation of a faculty-led approach is illustrated by the following memo that was circulated to students by a colleague deeply committed to helping students complete their studies:

> *To Student-colleagues whose dissertations I am directing and*
>
> *To Student-colleagues on whose dissertation committees I serve as a member*
>
> Beginning in January 1996, I intend to meet with two study groups to aid your dissertation work. The first group is *mandatory* for anyone who wishes me to direct his/her dissertation; the second group is *optional* for those on whose dissertation committees I serve as a member. Unless there is a large number of persons for whom the following schedule is impossible, the mandatory group will meet on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, and the optional group will meet on the second Wednesday of each month. Our meeting place will be the set of tables under the escalators at the snack bar area. Our meeting time for both groups will be 5:30-7:00 p.m.
>
> Our meetings will generally follow the pattern of the Pro-seminar. That is, designated persons will present work in progress for the group to discuss and give feedback. The sessions are meant to be helpful, not negatively critical, but you should expect participants to question you hard about your work. This is an excellent way to help you get outside your own biases and to refine your study.
>
> For the first meeting of your group, please come prepared with a one-page synopsis of your intended study. This should include an abbreviated problem statement and a brief description of method. Please have copies for everyone, including yourself and me. At the first meeting we will skim these synopses and set a presentation schedule for the balance of the spring term.
>
> To help you with your work, I have asked the book center to stock two books: Byron L. Stay (1996), *A Guide to Argumentative Writing*, San Diego: Greenhaven Press; and David J. Sternberg (1981), *How to Complete and Survive a Doctoral Dissertation*, New York: St. Martin's Press. In addition you should have the university's guide to theses and dissertations and the latest edition of the APA style manual.
>
> Because of the intense work demands of these groups, along with other professional obligations, I ask that you attend only the meetings for your group—at least for the spring term. Further, I ask that you let me know whether to expect you for the first meeting of your group. This especially applies to the optional group. Thanks, and I look forward to working with you.

As indicated in the memo, this faculty-led group is structured more along the lines of a doctoral seminar. Yet it is not a for-credit course and represents a faculty member's voluntary commitment to provide considerable guidance to students throughout the dissertation process.

Another, more time-limited approach is represented by formal, for-credit courses that provide a structure for writing the overview. At our own university, such a course is offered by Dr. J. E. Mauch, co-author with Dr. J. W. Birch of the book *Guide to the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: Conception to Publication: A Handbook for Students and Faculty* (1983). Students working in a variety of research genres can register for the course with the express intent of drafting the research proposal. Evolving from this academically based experience can be ongoing, student-organized, and student-led study or support groups.

Students often form these groups as they gravitate to others with whom they feel a sense of connection. In some instances, the connection is based on a commonality such as stage of doctoral work. In other cases, similarities in context of practice (e.g., school administration), geographic proximity, or area of study draw students together. International students who often face additional educational and social challenges during their doctoral work often find a support group to be of great help.

Just as our study group has a dark side, we have seen instances in which support groups turn into complaint groups where members band together to bemoan "academic hoops" and "dissertation politics." Establishing ground rules for support groups can help to prevent such a negative dynamic. One group at our institution recounted how it searched the Internet for information about starting a group. The members found and shared with others the following "12 Rules for Forming Support Groups":

1. Get at least five students (diversity). Different backgrounds (quantitative/qualitative, computer skills, methodologies, etc.)
   - Compatible personalities
   - Similar stages in the dissertation process
2. Meet once a week and give all members a copy of everybody's thesis (at whatever stage) at the first session.
3. Feature two members' research per meeting, about 45 minutes each.
4. Provide each member with an abstract of what will be discussed at least 3 days before meetings.
5. Keep criticism constructive.
6. Agree that each member will spend 3 hours each week on support group activities (1 hour to read and critique drafts, 2 hours to meet).
7. Start or end meeting with 15 minutes for other members to report progress and mention specific problems.
8. If you have less than four students available, postpone the meeting. Otherwise, the presenting student won't get a variety of viewpoints.

9. Get agreement for confidentiality at the first session so that everyone can speak openly, even about faculty or other students.
10. Acknowledge dissertation victories. Celebrate accomplishments such as getting the dissertation approved and passing the defense.
11. Restrict discussion to thesis matters only.
12. Have each member tape-record the session focusing on his or her thesis.

Interestingly, the students who shared these rules had customized their own group norms, indicating that they do not follow Rules 11 and 12.

Despite differences in structure, leadership, tone, and style, these various efforts to support dissertation work seem to reflect several key values, including commitment to participate, giving to others as well as getting for oneself, and accountability. Another commonality is the emphasis on presenting drafts of one's own work and providing constructive, critical feedback to one another. In essence, we see in all these options an effort to create a mini-discourse community that can support students' deliberations about their dissertation.

If, for some reason, such study or support groups are not available to a student, we recommend evolving a deliberative/discursive relationship with one's dissertation advisor. Although some students do this instinctively, others may first need to shift their perspective. Some students seem to view their advisors as minor functionaries who do little more than sign registration forms each semester. Other students may be reluctant to impose upon their advisor, failing to realize that tuition paid for dissertation credits entitles them to time and attention from their advisor and dissertation committee members. Particularly regrettable are those students who see their advisor and committee as "the enemy" and hold them at arm's length. Feeling threatened or intimidated, such students may remain in "course mode," laboring in isolation to produce a paper that they assume will be awarded a passing or failing grade by their committee. Such a perspective cuts students off from an important support for discursive deliberation.

THINK PIECE #3

Knowledge Claims and the Issue of Legitimacy in Educational Research

It is generally assumed that the primary function of educational research is to create new knowledge. Educational researchers do their inquiry in order to have something to say about the state of affairs and to understand and improve our educational conditions and institutional patterns. As a result of carrying out the inquiry, the researcher claims to have found out something new about a particular aspect of education. In reporting the results of the inquiry, the researcher makes public, for a particular audience, what he or she is claiming. The function of the written report is not only to inform the readers about what the researcher is claiming, but also to convince them of the "truthfulness," or perhaps a better term these days is the *verité*, of the claim.

We'd like to set a context for this think piece by relating two conversations Noreen had recently. One was a conversation with Marcy, a research assistant who works for the Research and Evaluation Department of a large urban school district in Pittsburgh. We were talking about a current project she had been assigned by the Director.

"My assignment," Marcy said, "was to develop a survey of opinions our staff held about the Personnel Department. It seems that there had been some dissonance between the Personnel Department and the rest of the staff. The Board of Directors asked for clarification of the issues. Well, I didn't really know what the nature of the disagreements were. I didn't know much about what the Personnel Department did either, so I began to talk with people. I did formal interviews, I had conversations over lunch with people from both groups, I talked to people in the elevators. I listened to their stories about important incidents. By the time I had to construct the items for the survey, I knew more about the Personnel Department and the situation with the staff than I ever imagined. It was rich stuff. Somehow, when I began to put it into abstract form for the items on the survey, though, it was lifeless and didn't really get to the heart of the matter."

Noreen asked her why she felt that she couldn't use the rich data for her research results, instead of findings from a survey instrument.

"My boss," Marcy answered, "really only believes that quantitative data is full-blown, or maybe, *hard* research. If I reported the results of all the narrative data, that would only be my own interpretations. The survey would *verify* that the respondents really hold certain views. It would be more objective. I'm really frustrated, though, because the findings on the survey really don't get to the heart of the matter." She repeated several times, "It doesn't get to the heart of the issues."

A few days later, one of Noreen's colleagues in the Educational Psychology Department came into her office. She's a nationally known researcher who has received million-dollar grants to do research in her field. She told about one of her doctoral students, who has a profound personal story on which to draw for her dissertation. It seems her student, Alma, has cancer, and during her lengthy treatment, Alma began to notice how her own learning capacity had changed and how difficult it was for those who worked with her to understand the changes. She wanted to portray the special learning disability that occurs as a result of the treatment for a terminal illness. This colleague wondered whether an autobiographical approach would be considered "real" research. Noreen assured her that, indeed, it was certainly a respectable genre for dissertation research. (One of the students in the study group had just finished an autobiographical study that her committee had called "a stunning piece of work.") Our colleague was both relieved and skeptical. It was clear that she was not quite convinced that autobiography is a legitimate approach for research. She kept saying, "But I just want to be certain that it is acceptable. After all, it's *just* a personal account."

In both of these conversations, the issue is *legitimacy*. What forms of representation are considered legitimate as knowledge claims? What constitutes legitimate research? The two conversations also reflect deeply held (and often dysfunctional) beliefs about what constitutes legitimate knowledge claims. Moreover, the belief about knowledge (what we believe to be legitimate knowledge from research) often resides in taken-for-granted assumptions that are rarely examined. Perhaps the most common assumption is that research knowledge is only established through scientific-like investigation, and quantification is the means for legitimate proof. Quantification is at the heart of a deep-rooted belief.[1] Students in our qualitative research course often tell us that they (or their committee members) "expect numbers in their study." More problematic is the common dysfunctional statement, "I want to do a qualitative study because I'm not good at statistics."

Polkinghorne (1997) describes the research assumptions that were prevalent in the social sciences during what he calls "the heyday of positivism." Knowledge was held to have the property of a logical conclusion derived through mathematical formulae. The results of a knowledge claim, as a hypothesis, were logically deduced, and then observations were made to determine if the results followed the hypothesis. As Polkinghorne points out,

> a true knowledge statement has logical certitude because it was the product of a formal process. As was the case with mathematical solu-

> tions, the validity of research conclusions were understood to be independent of both the person making the claim and the audience to whom the claim was presented. (p. 7)

More recently, according to Polkinghorne and others, the property of knowledge has been reconsidered.[2] Instead of a logical certainty, knowledge is understood as an agreement reached by communities of scholars. Knowledge is considered to be the best map or description of reality about which the community has reached consensus. In other words, no longer are knowledge portrayals considered to correspond with some external reality; rather, they are human constructions of models or maps of reality. Through dialectic exchanges, these constructions evolve toward more useful portrayals. As Polkinghorne (1997) says,

> The more evolved models are not necessarily more accurate descriptions of reality, but their use provides a more successful interaction with the world than previous models. Research reports informed by this understanding of knowledge may be presented as arguments or as narrative accounts. (p. 7)

Currently, there are communities of scholars in education, known as postpositivists, who have modified the rigid rules of logical positivism.[3] They continue to develop properties of knowledge that reflect the original notion of *correspondence*, which is that knowledge is a certain product of logical operations, in other words, that it is possible to develop knowledge portrayals that correspond directly to external reality.

The postpositivists' notions of knowledge (related both to ontology and epistemology) are quite different from the notions of scholars who understand knowledge as a map or portrayal of aspects of self, others, and society. For these scholars, the press is not for correspondence but for *coherence*. To strive for coherence within research portrayals, the researcher is obliged to warrant logical interconnections with an overall sense of understanding. The notion of coherence assumes a unity in a written text that stems from the links among its underlying ideas and the development of thematic content. (A geographical map, for instance, may not be considered to have a direct correspondence with the terrain. It is the cartographer who designs a map *for a particular purpose* and *for a specific audience*. It is the cartographer's interpretation that determines how he or she will portray the geographical terrain with coherence.) The issue of coherence in educational portrayals, however, is more complex than that of the geographic map. Geographic terrain offers a somewhat stable reality from which to interpret various properties. Educational phenomena, on the other hand, include cultural properties, time, space, and human interactions (to mention a few) that are continually shifting. For this reason, some educational researchers (e.g., Barone, 1992, 1995) argue that educational portrayals are fictive by nature, because the text of research can never ensure the kind of certainty that those who claim correspondent reality strive to attain.

Thus, the philosophies of knowledge are quite different for those who identify with a *correspondence theory* and those who assume a *coherence theory*. Knowledge claims are different for each, and although researchers rarely make public their perspective in research documents, it should be clear through their discourse communities where they most identify. Although they remain as competing worldviews, correspondence and coherence perspectives have space and respect in the educational research community at large.

In the latter part of the 1970s through the early 1980s, however, there were strong arguments and disagreements within the scholarly community about the nature and character of educational research. It would be simplistic to posit that the arguments centered primarily on the correspondence/coherence differences. It was, however, one implicit factor. And although the decade of the 1990s has brought a quieting of the debates, there exists a détente-like quality to the discourses.

The debates evolved around differing assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature and purposes of knowledge (epistemology) as the various intellectual traditions competed to establish newer conventions of inquiry. Many scholars associated with the disciplines serving educational research, such as sociology, anthropology, political science, and psychology, began to think of social science as "dialects of language which provide heuristic fictions for supposing the world is this way or that way" (Popkewitz, 1984, p. vii). Educational researchers began to look anew at literary criticism, philosophy, and rhetoric for legitimizing their knowledge claims. Thus, we were reminded of the social and communal contexts of research that have come to be called *communities of discourse*. It is through a community of like-minded scholars within a common field that knowledge is generated through the various notions of discourse (Sills & Jensen, 1992). It is also the case that discourse communities have various means of critiquing the knowledge claims of their members through review processes. Those who formally represent the review process (e.g., journal editors, conference paper reviewers, dissertation committee members) serve as gatekeepers and often decide what is acceptable as legitimate knowledge claims.

In our experience, many novice researchers in education do not identify with traditional disciplines in order to set forth the conventions of knowledge generating. They may have majored in a social science discipline as an undergraduate yet feel far removed from the current discourses regarding epistemology and ontology. Often, they associate the legitimacy of educational research with data-collecting and analysis techniques to support valid findings. As Popkewitz (1984) points out, research is "a complex process in which particular data collecting techniques assume meaning and significance *only in relation to the assumptions of the larger intellectual traditions in which the techniques are applied*" (emphasis added, p. ix). In recent years, educational discourse communities have emerged and are forming intellectual traditions through professional organizations, special issues, fields of study, and so on. Perhaps one of the best ways to get in touch with the notion of discourse communities is through a list and description of the Special Interest Groups that have formed in the American Educational Research Association, as well as the various other professional organizations in education.

For the novice researcher who may become preoccupied with the functions of data collection and analysis, there is the challenge of understanding that issues of legitimacy of knowledge claims reside within the communities of discourse that the researcher is attempting to influence. Thus, the researcher is obliged to make clear what theoretic principles shape the logic of his or her inquiry.

Notes

1. See Crosby (1997). Crosby discusses the epochal shift to quantitative perception in Western European thought during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. This shift, he contends, made modern science, technology, business practice, and bureaucracy possible. By the 16th century, more people were thinking quantitatively in western Europe and thereby created a dominance throughout the world. Crosby's work helps to explain the quantitative mind-set that we hold even today as a dominant way of thinking.

2. See, for instance, Angus and Langsdorf (1993), Bruner (1986), Habermas (1979), Heshusius and Ballard (1996), and Polkinghorne (1988), to mention only a few.

3. Logical positivism, as a philosophy of science, dominated the research thinking of the physical sciences from the 1920s to 1950s. Schrag (1992) contends that this philosophy enjoyed about a 30-year life "before the weight of criticisms of their doctrines caused its internal collapse" (p. 5). The vestiges of positivism still remain in much of the research approaches today.

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THINK PIECE #4

Tuning In to Discourses on Qualitative Inquiry

Although there now exists a very large number of references labeled "qualitative inquiry," including books, journal articles, and journal titles, the term *qualitative* is a very unfortunate one for the novice researcher. As an adjective, it can refer to varieties of social and educational inquiries that have their intellectual roots in hermeneutics, phenomenological sociology or psychology, literary criticism, cultural studies, or aesthetics. Many scholars use the phrase *qualitative inquiry* as a generic description for any of the above, as well as for ethnography, case study research, naturalistic inquiry, autobiography, narrative inquiry, and similar genres. Because the adjective is so broad and evasive, it poses a challenge to novice researchers who are attempting to find places to stand in the field of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Although educational researchers have conducted qualitative studies for decades, their work was not part of an established field of inquiry with procedures and university courses to provide guidance and structure. Except for the ethnographic tradition in anthropology, the University of Chicago style of case studies in sociology in the United States, and the action research efforts in the United Kingdom, there were few accepted models to which educational researchers with a qualitative bent could turn for direction prior to 1980. The psychometric model long dominated educational research, as it has generally dominated the social and behavioral sciences. If professors and their students departed from it, they invited scorn, if not rejection. To conduct experiments and surveys was to be scientific: to do otherwise was to be soft, wrong, or muddle headed (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). By 1980, even the positivist psychometricians were beginning to feel the constraints of their tight models of generating knowledge. Many of these researchers, now referred to as postpositivists, began to accept, at least in part, the place that language has in shaping human existence and reluctantly acknowledged the possibility that all human reality is socially constructed. The term *qualitative* meant exploring the broader understanding possible in natural conversations and narratives, as well as examining the essential qualities within human experience.

Thus, in the early 1980s, the term *qualitative*, to some, meant the attention to language, even though they adhered to the press for scientific-like models for ensuring validity and reliability for the sake of objectivity. In other words, they acknowledged that in quantitative research, the good may be found in fidelity to design, whereas qualitative research is relatively lacking in canons and conventions. The good is more elusive because qualitative procedures are more idiosyncratic. And although there was early debate that centered on quantitative versus qualitative, this is *not* the center of the controversies in qualitative research. We would suggest, however, that it was this early debate that gave us the unfortunate name "qualitative" as a contrast to the dominant mode of inquiry using mathematical formulae to ensure rigorous science. As Schwandt (1997) suggests, "The earliest qualitative versus quantitative debates might better have been called, 'The Merits of Nonnumeric Versus Numeric Data Debates,' but that doesn't have quite the same ring to it as the more common designation of the controversy" (p. 130). At that time, the debate also meant defending, as reliable and valid, the methods used to generate qualitative data (e.g., unstructured, open-ended questions; conversations; participant observation) from attacks by those who believe in methods used to generate quantitative data (e.g., psychometric measures, surveys, tests).

It is unfortunate that the term *qualitative* serves only to confuse the novice researcher. What is clear, however, is that the controversies cannot be reduced to two contrasting positions, quantitative versus qualitative, or even to a single set of polar types. The debate involves multiple issues. A wide variety of positions have been adopted by discourse communities who share common ideologies and judge each other's work (Hammersley, 1989). We would suggest, however, that the qualitative versus quantitative arguments of the 1980s are no longer a major concern in educational research. The debates that now go on are primarily *within* discourse communities rather than across competing communities. The many qualitative research traditions (those that are long established as well as those that have emerged within the past decade) are being substantiated as legitimate forms of educational research.[1] However, we suggest to novice researchers that they be extremely cautious about labeling their research as "qualitative." Without a clear understanding of the principles that ground their research rationale, qualitative research, as a descriptor, is relatively meaningless.

We mentioned "communities of discourse" who claim to be doing qualitative inquiry. In educational research, these communities generally are located within three and often four "paradigmatic" camps. Soltis (1984) labels three research approaches associated with these camps as *empirical*, *interpretive*, and *critical* inquiry.[2] Sipe and Constable (1996) also include deconstructivism as the fourth camp. Yvonna Lincoln (1994) calls the first group (associated with empirical inquiry) postpositivist qualitative researchers who adhere to the principles of objectivity, validity, and reliability as their canons for rigorous findings. For postpositivists, reality is "out there," and the job of the researcher is to discover the objectively true portrayals that correspond to the reality under study. Ontologically speaking, the postpositivists believe that they do not make the world, but rather, that the world is a given, and they find the meanings that are inherent in

reality. Miles and Huberman (1984) would be an example of those scholars who advocate empirical qualitative methods of data analysis as the centerpiece for what they consider to be rigorous research.

The second group is generally called interpretivists. A basic tenet of interpretivism includes the notion that as reflective human beings, we construct our realities, for the most part, in discourse communities. Other descriptors for this camp include constructivists or phenomenologists. Their works grow out of a hermeneutic orientation based on interpretation and the search for deeper understanding. For the interpretivist, the world is constructed by each knower/observer according to both subjective and intersubjective dialogical exchanges. Interpretivists are concerned with symbolic meanings and various forms of representation that help the reader better understand the phenomenon under study. As such, interpretivists do not claim that their research portrayals *correspond* to a general reality, but rather that interpretivist portrayals strive for *coherence*, which provides the reader with a vivid picture of the essence of the meanings of what is under study. This group tends to feel that the postpositivists have co-opted the term *qualitative*, and, furthermore, that the postpositivists ignore issues of the theoretic, or worldview orientation of the researcher, focusing primarily on methods or techniques for legitimizing data, analysis, and findings. The interpretivists argue that the theoretic perspective one takes is central to one's inquiry. They have very different concerns about what constitutes good designs; how one portrays the phenomenon under study; and what kinds of standards for authenticity, rigor, or trustworthiness might be usefully acquired and judged. Issues of portrayal, or what Eisner (1993) calls forms of representation, are central to this kind of research reporting.

The third group is referred to as the criticalists. As Lincoln (1994) says, they might not call themselves that, but they are known as critical theorists. Their stance in many ways is similar to the interpretivists regarding most of the features of reality (ontologically speaking). However, the sociopolitical-economic features of reality are taken as "objectively" real and not dependent on the perspective of the observer/researcher. Neo-Marxists and feminist scholars are often associated with critical theorists, but the group is extremely diverse and has in common a proclivity to direct the purposes of its research to questions about social, historical, political, gender, and/or economic forces. Their uses of these theoretic lenses to examine the situations under study give rise to the name critical theorists. A major genre associated with critical theory research is the polemic.

The fourth group, grounded in postmodernism, is identified as deconstructivists. According to Sipe and Constable (1996), in deconstructivist thought, the relativism implied in interpretivism and critical theory is "taken to its ultimate limit: deconstructivists assert that formulations of truth are always embedded in language, which can be shown to be self-contradictory at certain points. . . . We can't get outside our own symbol systems, and are therefore constrained by their vulnerability" (p. 159). From a deconstructivist perspective, our "networks of regularity," whether social or linguistic, are exposed as radically unstable and subjective (Scheurich, 1997).

A cautionary note needs to be sounded as novice researchers read descriptors about these concepts and take them to be definitions of four paradigmatic camps. We continue to hear our students associate themselves with the descriptors. After reading them, one student remarked, for instance, "I know I'm a critical theorist because I look at educational phenomena with a skeptical eye. I also realize that politics plays an important part in most decisions that are made in schools. These descriptions fit me." The student had not yet grasped the importance of communities of discourse and the notion that it is through the discourses associated with each camp that the meanings emerge. Once the descriptors are abstracted from their discourses, they lose their discursive meanings and persuasive power.

It is important to note that within these four broad camps, there are substrands based on genre (e.g., ethnography, symbolic interactionism, grounded theory) that are often, but not always, identified with disciplines (anthropology, sociology) or fields of study in education (curriculum studies, teacher education). Each of the many discourse communities takes its own perspectives on judging the "goodness" of qualitative research. These four perspectives are, of course, loose constructions of the educational research community orientations and are seldom found in their purest forms.

There are, however, a few tenets to which postmodern interpretivists and criticalists will agree.[3] The first is that science cannot make claims to ultimate truth. Science simply cannot make what are called totalizing or grand narratives. That leads to another assertion about the postmodern world, and that is that all knowledge is partial, and that one takes a definite perspective toward the world one is studying. And the third tenet is that knowledge always comes from a person who holds a social location. For this reason, many research pieces begin with a narrative of the researcher's social location and research assumptions.

In another sense, educators are turning their attention to questions of justice and compassion. As we move into the postmodern era, we move into a new stage of the human struggle to evolve as moral beings. As Anderson (1990) points out,

> In post-modern terms we do not—as so many fear—cease to be moral animals and slide into hedonistic or savage normlessness. But neither are we subservient to the various holy tablets containing eternal prescriptions about what we should or should not do. It ceases to be a secret that morality is socially defined, and with the revelation of that secret, a conviction is born in the minds of many—for example Marx and Foucault—that social definitions of morality are power grabs and conspiracies. (pp. 153-154)

Thus, in the postmodern sense, scholars have turned away from the rational/technical explanations of knowledge claims and toward heuristic understandings reflected in debate and discussion. As a result, there is a revival of interest in rhetoric and philosophy. Human inquiry has entered a "new situation" where the convictions and orientations have traditionally marked the separation of rhetoric, with its focus on persuasion, and philosophy, with its concern for

truth claims. These two have begun to converge on a new space that can be found through the central term *discourse* (Angus & Langdorf, 1993). A major theme in qualitative research is the need to create spaces for the heretofore unheard voices and positions in human inquiry.

Tuning in to the discourses of qualitative inquiry requires a great deal of keen understanding of our own research proclivities and the discourse communities that reflect them. The decade of the 1980s has seen a revolution in thinking about the basis of educational inquiry and practice. As educational scholars announced at the beginning of the decade, "something is happening to the way we think about the way we think." Qualitative research is one of those ways.

Notes

1. One need only review the Conference Programs of the Annual Meetings of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) for the past decade to get a sense of the proliferation of research traditions and genres associated with qualitative research.

2. Although educational researchers generally agree that the field can be distinguished by three inquiry approaches known as empirical, interpretive, and critical, scholars continue to remind us that the field is more complex and interrelated than these three. Several scholars have attempted to portray or "map" the field with more comprehensive construals. See Paulston and Liebman (1994) and Wolcott (1992), to mention only a few.

3. A delightfully informative book on postmodernism is Walter Truett Anderson's (1990) *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic and Other Wonders of the Post Modern World*, San Francisco: Harper & Row.

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THINK PIECE #5

Text/Interpretation

What Do We Mean by "Text"?

The notion of *text* is a critical one in interpretive inquiry, and yet we can probably never get hold of the meaning of text. Some researchers who claim to be qualitative (e.g., Miles & Huberman, 1984) use the term *data display* instead of text. In education, we tend to use text and textbook synonymously. Yet in hermeneutic theories—hermeneutics being the study of interpretation (Palmer, 1969; Ricoeur, 1991)—the meaning of text is central to the discourses. Literary theorists and other philosophers continue to explore the meaning of text and textuality in their considerations of interpretation (Barthes, 1976; Derrida, 1989; Ray, 1986). We will not attempt to summarize these discourses—we don't think we can. Yet it is important to note that they exist, lest we run the risk of being completely naive in this think piece.

Stanley Fish (1980) begins *Is There a Text in This Class?* by saying,

> The answer this book gives to its title question is, "there is and there isn't." There isn't a text in this or any other class if one means by texts what E.D. Hirsch and others mean by it, "an entity which always remains the same from one moment to the next." But *there is a text in this and every class if one means by text the structure of meanings that is obvious and inescapable from the perspective of whatever interpretive assumptions happen to be in force.* (p. vii)

In Fish's notion, it seems that a text is manifest through its potential interpretations and vice versa. Some see this continual text/interpretation as a hermeneutic spiral, ever changing, ever elusive. Ironically, the act of research and writing tends to fix the text/interpretation more as Fish claims than as E. D. Hirsch suggests. Moreover, in order to look more closely at inquiry, it is sometimes necessary to speculate about the various "pieces" of complex processes. So it is that we might focus on texts, the warrants for texts and the interpretations (as perhaps

yet another text) as they might relate to interpretive dissertations. This may be a simplistic approach, but it's a beginning.

Eisner (1991), in *The Enlightened Eye*, reminds us that writers display the ability to transform their own experience into a public form called text, which, when artfully crafted, allows us to participate. We come to know a scene by virtue of what the writer has made. Thus, the writer starts with qualities and ends with words. The interpretation starts with words and ends with qualities. At the center of the text question is the issue of *portrayal*. How shall the author's experience be represented? Will it be narrative, story, a series of statistical tables or frequencies, poetry, or other forms of representations?

Some interpretivists will posit that all texts are, to some extent, *interpretations*. Others distinguish *description* from *interpretation*, suggesting that description can be thought of as "giving an account of," whereas interpretation can be regarded as "accounting for." Thus, a story might be a vivid description of an event, perhaps an emphatic recapitulation designed to heighten the intensity of an already tense moment. (You can see the interpretive overtones already in the choice of images and language.) In an artistic piece, this form of representation would be enough. The aesthetic can stand alone as a text. In a dissertation, however, the author is expected to provide interpretations that further educational understandings. To understand the covert or implied meanings in a situation, the interpretations must penetrate the surface. The researcher must seek what Clifford Geertz (1973) refers to as "thick description." Geertz writes,

> A good interpretation of anything—a poem, a person, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society—takes us into the heart of that of which it is the interpretation. When it does not do that, but leads instead somewhere else—into an admiration of its own elegance, of its author's cleverness, or of the beauties of Euclidean order—it may have its intrinsic charms; but it is something else than what the task at hand—figuring out what all that rigmarole with the sheep is about—calls for. (p. 60)

Thus, in the interpretive stance, researchers must, in a sense, distance themselves from the scene in order to explain its meaning and to account for what has been described. Eisner (1991) reminds us that to interpret is

> to place in context, to explain, to unwrap, to explicate. It is, as some might say, a hermeneutic activity of decoding the message within the system. To be sure, there is no code to crack, at least not in the technical sense. But there is a surface to be penetrated. If description deals with what is, interpretation focuses upon why and how. (p. 97)

But, Eisner continues, "The line between description and interpretation is harder to draw than one might like to believe" (p. 97).

Iterative Interpretation

In the lunchroom conversation, we hear a teacher's expression of delight in being away from the classroom and the relief from the daily routine of schooling, of being able to converse with colleagues. We learn that she uses her own version of cooperative learning yet questions the external model being offered in the name of research. We hear her trying to say that the workshop format and subsequent supervision diminishes what she does as a teacher. We hear a principal who needs to support his position by appealing to the authority of research. He may, indeed, be frustrated by the skepticism—and, often, resistance—generated from teachers about their own professional development. (Doctors and lawyers continue to learn without such resistance, he implies.)

Conceptual Interpretation

If we go a bit deeper into the interpretation, we begin to enter the realm of conceptual considerations. The differences reflected in the teacher/supervisor conversation can be attributed to philosophic considerations, often referred to as different "ways of knowing." Each of us comes to his or her judgments and actions through philosophic orientations. The term *orientation* refers to the specific ways in which an individual looks at the world. On the surface, it includes the notions of point of view, perspective, and a person's outlook in relation to events and ideas. (We're not convinced that we hold a consistent orientation, but, rather, we suspect it changes depending on the circumstances at hand.)

Van Manen (1977) reminds us that "underlying every orientation is a definite epistemology, axiology, and ontology" (p. 211). These high-sounding philosophic terms literally mean that a person's orientation is composed of what he or she believes to be true (epistemology), to be valuable (axiology), and to be real (ontology). "An orientation," Van Manen says, "has the uncanny quality of encapsulating the person who has learned to adopt it" (p. 211). In supervision, the issue of epistemological legitimacy is a critical one. Each person's orientation provides him or her with rules for legitimacy in action. In the lunchroom conversation, for instance, one can ask, Where does the legitimacy reside in a particular model of cooperative learning? The teacher appeals to pragmatic authority when she uses her experience in saying, "I don't believe that competition is the best approach," whereas the principal evokes scientific authority, responding with "research says . . ." in his claim for legitimacy.

In this scenario, the stance of the teacher is grounded in her pragmatic sense. She "knows" what works through her years of experience in the classroom. The principal's scientific counterstance may be a result of his concern that the teacher's way of teaching from experience is narrow and habitual, and he would like to see her change her perspective. On the other hand, the principal may be heavily invested in his own position. He was "inserviced" in a particular teaching model and is linking his version of clinical supervision to this model. Furthermore, in his mind, his clinical supervision skill depends on his "knowing" what good teaching is.

Two Kinds of Interpretation

For the purpose of our discussion regarding interpretations in dissertation research, we suggest that we might examine two kinds of interpretation: iterative and conceptual. *Iterative interpretation* tends to summarize, to repeat the essentials of a text. The author iterates the significant points or details of the text. *Conceptual interpretation* draws on concepts and theories (whether substantive or formal) that serve to explain the situation. It is here that the researcher often draws on the theoretic discourses in the literature that relate to the text.

We will attempt to present an example of these two forms of interpretation. The following is a text that Noreen generated for a piece of writing. After the text, we present both iterative and conceptual interpretations. We end with a discussion of the significance of warrants to interpretive inquiry.

An Example of Text/Interpretation

Text

I was in the teachers' cafeteria in a suburban middle school the other day, and I overheard an interesting conversation between a teacher and the principal. The previous day, they had attended an all-day workshop about cooperative learning. The principal asked the typical supervisory question, "Well, Grace, how did you feel about the workshop?"

Grace responded, "Well, first of all, I loved getting away from the building and the kids . . . right about now I really needed the break, and the other teachers were interesting to talk to. About the cooperative learning model . . . well, I have some mixed feelings. You know, I do project groups in my class, the kids work together on a project in small groups, and I really like the way it goes . . . but I don't have the groups competing against each other. In the cooperative learning model, the groups compete against one another. I really don't agree with that."

The principal said, "Well, you know, the cooperative learning model comes from research. They have hundreds of studies to prove that the competitive model really works better."

Grace said, "Yeah, well, I suppose I can't argue with research, but well, I know what works with my kids." Then she paused, "You know what really gets me about this stuff . . . every time we have one of these days, we hear about ideas from research and it makes me feel like what I do in my class doesn't really count very much. The message is, we better start doing something from the workshop. And then you come into class with clinical supervision to see whether we're doing it or not."

Thé principal answered, "Well, I suppose that's what professional development is. All professionals, like lawyers and doctors, keep upgrading their skills as long as they're in practice."

There is a substantial difference between these two positions. They are not mere differences of opinion but, rather, epistemological conflict. That is, the difference grows from what each takes to be true (knowing from experience vs. scientific legitimacy). In this case, it is the principal, as supervisor, who is on shakier ground. His scientific "knowing" about teaching is limited to brief inservice training. He may have been told about the research, but chances are he would not have read the "hundreds of studies" to which he refers. Yet in this scenario, the teacher with a pragmatist stance (I know from experience) and the principal with a scientific realist counterstance (I've learned what good teaching is from research) are participants in one of the most common dialogues in clinical supervision.

Warrants

All good research must provide warrants that serve to give reliable or formal assurance(s) of the claims made by the author. Warrants are the essential logics that give the research its authority and its sanction. There are at least two types of warrants within a dissertation. The first is what we have referred to as the *logic of justification* (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). The researcher, in an interpretive inquiry, explicates the essential logics (assumptions and principles) that guide the research approach itself. (An ethnography has a different set of logics from a literary criticism. A biography has a different logic from a legal/educational argument.) Worldview assumptions are part of the articulation. If the researcher is doing a science report (empirical approach, whether qualitative or quantitative), he or she often skips the logic of justification associated with the underlying worldview. In this case, the researcher is obligated to articulate the warrants for the technical aspects of the project.

A second and perhaps more illusive kind of warrant is associated with the text/interpretation itself. In this, the warrants may reside in the evidence and testimony culled by the researcher, in the cogent and convincing propositions that serve to create a logical argument, or the story that reflects the verisimilitude. Because the purpose of interpretive inquiry is to portray a deeper understanding of the topic under study (*not to prove that something exists*), the warrants serve to make the "portrayals" ring true.

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Index

Abrams, M. H., 29
"Academic Gadfly," 3
Academic hoops mentality, 41
Adams, M., 45, 219
Aha moment, 172, 175, 179
Alasuutari, P., 44
Allen, M. N., 66, 78
American Educational Research Association (AERA), 168, 211
  annual meeting, 170
  1996 meeting, 149, 152
  1997 meeting, 61
  publications, 40
  Special Interest Group on Arts-Based Educational Research, 61, 218, 241-242
  Special Interest Group on Qualitative Research, 61, 241-242
  Web site, 27, 49
Anderson, W. T., 43, 58, 244, 246, 247
Angus, L., 240, 242, 247
Anzul, M., 44
Arena of practice, 25
  writing about, 25-27
Atkinson, P., 45
Ayers, W., 40, 159

Bakhtin, M., 229
Ballard, K., 29, 35, 42, 58, 240, 242
Banks, J. A., 38
Barone, T., 29, 45, 65, 240
Barthes, R., 248
Belth, M., 28
Berliner, D. C., 38
Biklen, S. K., 44
Birch, J. W., 65, 81, 236
Blackford, J., 21, 35
Bogdan, R. C., 44
Bové, P. A., 228
Brickman, W. W., 44
Bruner, J., 45, 67, 134, 240, 242
Brunner, D. D., 44
Bullock, A., xviii

Calfee, R. C., 38
Candidate's intellectual life:
  interior transformations, 215-216
  loss of focus, 214-217
  refocusing, 214-222
Candidate's personal life:
  postdissertation rebalancing, 205-206
Candidate's professional life:
  postdissertation rebalancing, 206-214
  role of dissertation in, 195-197
Case studies, 43
Casey, K., 45
Castetter, W. B., 65, 81
Ceroni, K. M., 21, 35, 69, 73, 108, 212, 213
Cherryholmes, C., 228
Clandinin, D. J., 45, 47
Clark, C., 207
Coffey, A., 45
Coles, R., 67
Colwell, R., 38
Comprehensive exam, 51-52
Conceptual leap, coming to, 172, 179
Connelly, F. M., 45, 47
Constable, S., xii, 30, 244, 245
Constructivism; 30
Corbin, J., 45
Covino, W. A., 29
Crafting portrayals, generating knowledge through, 133-139, 144, 191
  core portrayal, 133-134, 135
  implications of lessons learned, 136, 155
  inquiry, 136, 155
  phenomenon and context under study, 133-135, 155

Crafting portrayals, generating knowledge through (*continued*)
salient features of phenomenon, 135-136, 155
See also Portrayals
Creswell, J. W., 44
Criticalists, 245, 246
Croaty, M., 44
Crosby, A. W., 29, 35, 239, 242
Cycles of deliberation, 1, 6-9
beginning phase, 7, 8
ending phase, 7-8
middle phase, 7, 8
mobilizing support, 9
outcomes from first, 32-35
pacing, 7-8
phases, 7-8
transitional phase, 7, 8

Dabbs, J. M., 44
Data, digitalizing nonverbal, 169
Data analysis procedures, 182
Data collection process, 180-182
Data display, 248
Davis, G. B., 65, 81
Deconstructivism, 244
Deconstructivists, 245
Deliberation, 3-4, 225-229
avoidance of, 3-4
and discourse, 228-229
discussion versus, 227
encapsulation versus, 225-227
inclination for, 3
seeking contexts for, 217-218
seeking directions for, 217-218
See also Cycles of deliberation
Deliberations on topic:
from nebulous ideas toward study, 23
getting in touch with topic, 19
human dilemma puddle, 19-21, 25
outrage and zeal role, 22-23
practitioner intervention puddle, 19, 20, 21
visualizing one's puddle, 23
Deliberative stances:
versus nondeliberative stances, 126
Denzin, N. K., xii, 29, 44, 45, 243
Derrida, J., 248
Dewey, J., 67, 142
Dimen, M., 213
Disciplines, 25, 28
Discourse communities, 48-49
advantages of being in, 126
Discourses, formal:
approaches for grappling with, 45-48
coming to grips with internal meaning of, 50
making sense of, 39
mind-set for listening to, 41-43
recognizing levels of, 43-45
See also Immersion in formal discourses
Discourses, real-time, 218
early encounters, 49, 51
Internet, 49
professional/research conferences, 49-50
See also Immersion in real-time discourses
Discursive deliberation, 229
vulnerability of, 52-58
Discursive knowing, 4-6
Dissertation:
emotional power of, 12
structural overview of, 100-102
transformative power of, 223
See also specific dissertations topics; Dissertations, qualitative
Dissertation, life after, 204-205
coping with career changes, 206-207
coping with perceptions of others, 207-210
internalizing one's identity as scholar, 210-214
loss of focus, 214-217
rebalancing personal life, 205-206
rebalancing professional life, 206-207
refocusing intellectual life, 214-222
Dissertation, postures toward:
cheerleading mentality and, 22, 23
deliberative curiosity, 22, 23
vendetta mentality and, 22, 23
Dissertation committee, 117-119
as educational gatekeeper, 117
as guardians of academic traditions, 117
as important resource, 118
sweetheart committee, 126-127
writing short study description for, 118-119
See also Dissertation defense; Research proposal, meeting to review
Dissertation defense:
anticipating practical considerations, 197-201
challenging Inquisition stereotype of, 187-189
continuity of process and relationships, 187-189
Inquisition image, 187
preparing dissertation document for, 198-200
reframing, 189
See also Dissertation meeting
Dissertation meeting, 186, 203
after, 201-202
participating in, 200-201

scheduling, 197
See also Dissertation defense
Dissertation process, bringing closure to, 201-202
Dissertation quality, 189-192
acceptable, 191-192
exemplary, 192
marginally acceptable, 190-191
unacceptable, 190
See also Dissertation quality, congruity of perspectives about; Dissertations, criteria for judging qualitative
Dissertation quality, congruity of perspectives about, 192-195
congruence of perspective, 192-193
disparity of perspectives, 193
necessary compromises, 194-195
working toward shared perspective 193-194
Dissertations, criteria for judging qualitative, 147-154
aesthetics, 148, 153, 189
ethics, 148, 153-154, 189
integrity, 147, 148, 189
rigor, 148, 149, 151, 189
utility, 148, 151-152, 189
verité, 147-149, 189, 238
vitality, 148, 152-153, 189
Dissertations, qualitative:
conceptual structures, 67-76
information to note when exploring, 49
literary arts-based examples, 69-76
Doctoral community, entering, 203
Doctoral study, meaning of, 17-19
Donmoyer, R., 42, 61, 65
Douglas, J. D., 45
Douglass, B. G., 45, 100, 101, 102
Downing, M., 44

Educational research, legitimacy in, 238-242
Eisner, E., 29, 45, 61, 62, 65, 101, 140, 144, 157, 175, 243, 245, 249
Elam, D., 28
Ely, M., 44
Erickson, K., 45
Ethical dilemmas, need for ethical sensibility and, 154

Facing the dissertation, 11
issues of concern, 13
See also Deliberations on topic; Personal Research Profile; "Precommitment Anxiety,"
Fahnestock, J., 29
Faulkner, R. R., 44
Fay, B., 21, 35
Feiman-Nemser, S., 207
Fetterman, D. M., 45
Field of study, 25, 27
Finley, S., 45
Firth, G. R., 37
Fish, S., 248
Fitzpatrick, J., 65, 81
Flood, J., 38
Flood, R., 44
Foucault, M., 228
Friedman, T., 44

Gabel, D., 38
Garman, N. B., 45, 73, 226
Garner, D., 44
Geertz, C., 247, 249
Glaser, B. G., 45, 143, 175
Glatthorn, A. A., 65, 81
Glesne, C., 44, 47
Good, J. M. M., 28, 29, 35
Goodwin, S. P., 21, 35
Greenwood, D. J., 45
Grouws, D. A., 38

Haberman, M., 38
Habermas, J., 240, 242
Halpin, D., 44
Hamel, J., 44
Hammersley, M., 66, 78, 244
Hargreaves, A., 45
Harris, M. C., 21, 35
Hattam, R., 44
Hawkins, P., 45
Hawpe, L., 45
Hazi, H. M., 21, 35
Heisler, R. S., 65, 81
Hermeneutics, 30, 43
Heshusius, L., 29, 30, 35, 42, 44, 58, 105, 240, 242, 252
Hinds, P. S., 66, 78
Hitchcock, G., 44
Hoffmann Davis, J., 45
Holland, P., 21, 35, 45
Holly, M. L., 155
Holt, J., 1
Hopkins, R. L., 67
Houston, W. R., 38
Huberman, M. S., 45, 245, 248
Hughes, D., 44

Immersion in formal discourses, 36
aim, 36, 41

Immersion in formal discourses (*continued*)
inquiry process, 41-48
intent of study, 37-41
Immersion in formal discourses, pitfalls of:
agree/disagree mentality, 38-40
blank slate, 38
laundry list literature review, 38
misinterpretation of original research, 37-38
strategies for counteracting, 40-41
Immersion in real-time discourses, 48-51
Inquiry, immersing oneself in, 157-159, 179
keeping focused, 158-159
purpose of, 157
preparing for, 157-158
tuning in to context, 159
Interim data displays, 183-185
Internal review board, obtaining approval from, 119-121
forms completion, 119
human subject reviews, 119
Interpretation, kinds of, 250
Interpretivists, 245, 246
Interviewing, 46
Isenberg, J., 207
Iterative cycles, 2. *See also* Cycles of deliberation

Jackson, B., 44
Jackson, P. W., 37
Jaeger, R. M., 29, 44
Jalongo, M., 207
Janesick, V. J., 155
Jensen, G. H., 228, 241
Jensen, J. M., 38
Jensen, L. A., 66, 78
Jonassen, D. H., 38
Josselson, R., 45
Judgment of merit, 186. *See also* Dissertation defense; Dissertation meeting
Juhl, P. D., 29

Kelly, G. A., 146
Kemmis, S., 45
Kincheloe, J. L., 21, 35
Knapp-Minick, B., 21, 35, 161
Knoeller, C., 45
Knowles, J. G., 45
Konzal, J., 21, 35, 68
Kridel, C., 45
Kuhn, T. S., 30, 61

Lancy, D. F., 44
Langsdorf, L., 240, 242, 247
Lapp, D., 38
Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., 45
Leukhardt, J. C., 21, 35
Levin, M., 45
Lieblich, A., 45
Liebman, M., 104, 112, 244, 247
Lincoln, Y. S., xii, 22, 29, 44, 45, 243, 244, 245
Llewellyn, M., 21, 35
Lyman, S. M., 28, 35
Literature, 103
Living with the study, 8, 129-131, 156
amassing stuff of the inquiry, 130, 156, 180-182
coming to conceptual leap, 130, 156
crafting portrayals, 130, 156
immersing oneself in the inquiry, 130, 156, 157-159
See also Stuff; Stuff, slogging through
Logic of justification, 30, 60, 62, 146, 147, 252
as research proposal research procedures, 105-106

Manheimer, M. L., 65, 81
Maranhao, T., 45
Marshall, C., 44
Mauch, J. E., 65, 81, 236
Maykut, P., 30
McCormack Steinmetz, A., 44
McCracken, G., 45
McGee Banks, C. A., 38
McMahon, P. L., 21, 35, 68
McTaggart, R., 45
Meloy, J. M., 44
Merriam, S. B., 44
Miles, M., 45, 245, 248
Millman, J., 37
Mishler, E. G., 45
Mitchell, W. J. T., 45, 67
Modernism, 30
Morehouse, R., 30
Morse, J. M., 66, 78
Moss, P. A., 207
Moustakas, C., 45, 100, 101, 102
Murphey, M., 38

Narrative modes of inquiry, 45
Neville, B., 43
Newton, R. R., 65, 81
Nielsen, H. B., 45

Oldfeather, P., 44

Pajak, E. F., 37
Palmer, R. E., 215, 216, 248

Parker, C.A., 65, 81
Paulston, R., 104, 112, 244, 247
Performing Arts Data Service (PADS), 169
Personal narrative inquiry, 67-69
Personal Research Profile, 13, 23, 27, 31, 51, 62, 85, 140
  essential pieces, 25
  focus, 24
  personal nature, 24
  purpose, 24
  See also Personal Research Profile, evolving; Personal Research Profile, explaining; Personal Research Profile, starting
Personal Research Profile, evolving:
  inquiry process, 25, 28-32
  intent of study, 24-28
Personal Research Profile, explaining:
  research genre, 25, 28, 29-30
  research method, 25, 28, 30
  research tradition, 25, 28, 29
Personal Research Profile, starting, 32
Peshkin, A. G., 44, 47, 243
Petrey, S., 29
Phenix, P. H., 28, 35
Piantanida, M., 45
Pilot test, 51
Pinar, W., 228
Poland, B. D., 45
Polkinghorne, D. E., 239, 240, 242
Popkewitz, T. S., 241
Porter, M., 218
Portrayals, 154-155, 156
  relationship among, 136-139
  exemplars of movement of stuff to, 172-177
  See also Crafting portrayals, generating knowledge through
Positivism, 30, 43
Postmodernism, 30, 43, 245
Postpositivism, 30, 43
  knowledge and, 240
Postpositivists, 243-245
"Precommitment Anxiety," 11, 13-17
  counterproductive dichotomy, 14-15
  infinitely receding horizon phenomenon, 13-14
  inner doubts, 16-17
  painful fussing, 15
Proposal. *See* Research proposal
Prosser, B., 154

Qualitative data, probing significance of, 165
Qualitative research:
  defensive approach to justifying, 47-48
  deliberation and, 34
  evolution of, 61
  generating knowledge in, 131-132
  tuning in to discourses on, 243-247
Qualitative study:
  facets, 59
  owning the, 144-146
  situating oneself in, 85-86
  trying out potential ideas for, 54-57

Ray, W., 248
Reason, P., 45
Reflection, 140-141, 173
  conceptual, 143-144
  See also Reflection, role of
Reflection, role of, 142-144
  as introspection, 142-143
  as recollection, 142
Reinharz, S., 66, 78
Remillard, J., 207
Research genres, 25, 28, 29-30, 60
  action research, 44-45
  arts-based educational research, 45
  case study, 44
  ethnography, 45
  grounded theory, 45
  heuristic research, 45
  mythopoetic research, 45
  range of, 60-62
Research proposal:
  crucial issues, 81
  recapping iterative nature of, 76-78
  See also specific research proposal topics
Research proposal, crafting, 59, 80
  as best approximation of dissertation, 66
  choice of tradition/genre, 62-64
Research proposal, meeting to review, 121-124
  aftermath of, 127-128
  dealing with outcomes of, 124-127
  faculty/student history and, 126
  listening to deliberations, 123-124
  purpose of, 121-122
  structure and process of, 122-124
Research proposal, potential pitfalls and:
  Fishing Expedition, 65
  Kitchen Sink Syndrome, 65
  Rumpelstiltskin Syndrome, 65-66, 149
  safeguarding against, 66
  Science Report Syndrome, 64-65
Research proposal, structure of, 81-82
  anticipated portrayals, 82
  example of, 113-115
  guiding research questions, 82
  introduction, 82, 84-88
  research procedures, 82

Research proposal, structure of (*continued*)
review of relevant discourses, 82
statement of intent, 82
tentative chapter outline, 82
the study, 82
title, 82-84
Research proposal, writing precursors to, 51-52
Research proposal anticipated portrayals, 111, 112
Research proposal guiding research questions, 82, 112
creating intellectual workspace, 93-94
initial articulation of, 95-96
key questions, 96-99
purpose of, 92-93
structuring inquiry through, 94-99
versus data-gathering questions, 97
Research proposal introduction, 82, 111
example of evolving, 87
framing the study, 85-88
guiding research questions, 88
orienting readers to proposal, 84-85
statement of intent, 88
Research proposal research procedures, 105-111, 112
as logic of justification, 105-106, 112
for each guiding research questions, 106-110
rationale for research genre, 106
Research proposal review of relevant discourse, 82, 112
decisions involved in, 104-105
organizing, 104
situating study in relevant discourses, 99, 103-104
versus review of literature, 99
Research proposal statement of intent, 82, 112
alternative frames, 92
choosing compatible intent, 91-92
evolution of, 93
practice-focused dissertations and, 90-9
versus statement of problem, 89-90
Research proposal study section, 82, 88-89, 112
when to write, 88, 89
where to place, 88, 89
Research proposal tentative chapter outline, 111
Research proposal titles, 82-84, 111
Research tradition, 60
Research worldview, 25, 30, 31-32
critical, 30
deconstructivist, 30, 43
empirical, 30, 43
interpretive, 30
reflective musings, 31
See also Constructivism; Hermeneutics; Modernism; Positivism; Postmodernism; Postpositivism
Researcher:
as instrument of inquiry, 139-141
developing self as instrument, 140-141, 183-185
Reynolds, W., 228
Richards, L., 16, 17, 21, 35, 68, 212
Richardson, L., 45, 58, 171, 219
Ricoeur, P., 248
Roberts, R. H., 28, 29, 35
Robinson, J. A., 45
Rossman, G. B., 44
Rowan, J., 102, 219
Rubin, H. J., 45
Rubin, I. S., 45
Rudestam, K. E., 65, 81

Salomon, G., 43
Sandelowski, M., 45
Sanida, K. V., 21, 35
Scheurich, J. J., 28, 35, 43, 58, 245
Schön, D., 142
Schrag, F., 242
Schratz, M., 44
Schwandt, T. A., xvi, xviii, 244
Secor, M., 29
Secrist, J., 65, 81
Seidman, I. E., 45
Shacklock, G., 44
Shapin, S., 29, 35
Shaver, J., 38
Sherman, R. R., 44
Short, E. C., 29, 44
Sikula, J., 37
Sills, C., 228, 241
Singer, R. N., 38
Sipe, L., xii, 30, 244, 245
Slattery, P., 228
Smith, D. G., 43
Smith, J. K., 30, 105, 252
Smyth, J., 44
Soltis, J. S., xi, 30, 244
Spindler, G., 22
Spodek, B., 38
Squire, J. R., 38
Stabile, M., 3, 219
Stake, R. E., 44
Stallybrass, O., xviii
Stay, B. L., 235
Stern, P. N., 45
Sternberg, D., 65, 81, 235
Stewart, A., 45

Strang, V. R., 66, 78
Strauss, A. L., 45, 143, 175
Street, A., 155
Stringer, E. T., 45
Study groups, dissertation, 4-6, 230-237
  mode of inquiry and, 232-234
  purpose, 231
  voluntary participation, 232
Stuff:
  accessing relevant, 161-162
  amassing, 159-166
  eliciting participant experiences, 163-166
  meaning of, 160-161
  nonverbal data, 169
  pack rat syndrome, 161
  resonating with, 183-185
  what it represents, 162-163
  See also Stuff, managing; Stuff, slogging through
Stuff, managing, 166-172
  analyzing data, 168
  cataloguing information, 166, 167-168
  creating stable data records, 166, 168-170, 174, 179
  from stable records to data displays/text, 166, 170-172
  managing multiple forms of data, 166, 168
Stuff, slogging through, 130, 156, 166-172, 176-177
  task avoidance and, 177-178
Stull, D., 45
Szabo, V., 66, 78

Task avoidance, 177-178
Taubman, P., 228
"Teflon Syndrome," 4
Tennant, L. K., 38
Term papers, 52
Text, 248-249
  conceptual interpretation, 251-252
  example of, 250
  iterative interpretation, 251
  See also Data display
Thick description, 249
Thorne, S., 66, 78
Tierney, W. G., 22, 45
Topic, 24
  See also Deliberations on topic
Trombley, S., xviii
Troyna, B., 44

Van Maanen, J., 44, 45
Van Manen, M., 43, 251
Vidich, A. J., 28, 35
Vinz, K., 44
Vogel, R. J., 66, 78
Voice, searching for, 86-87

Warrants, 252
Webb, R. B., 44
Welty, E., 220, 221
West, J., 44
Wexler, P., 21, 35
White, J., 213
White, P., 213
Whyte, W. F., 45
Wiegman, R., 28
Willis, P., 21, 35, 43
Wittrock, M. C., 37
Wolcott, H., 244, 247
Woods, P., 45
Wright, D. J., 65, 81
Writing, 171
  about arena of practice, 25-27
  avoidance of, 172
  becoming through, 220-222
  as way of knowing, 45
Writing agenda, refocusing, 218-222

Yennie-Donmoyer, J., 65
Yin, R. K., 44
Young, M. D., 28, 35

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